THE GOLDFIELD CRASH by GEORGE GRAHAM RICE

Adventure

The Albanian laughed. "Vendetta! That bullet was sped by order!"
from "THE ROAD"

July
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ADVENTURE

Contents for JULY 1911

Cover Design	Harry Townsend	
My Adventures with Your Money—Who Got It—and How. IV The Greenwater Fiasco—The Crash at Goldfield	George Graham Rice	381
A Three-Cornered Game. A Story	Philip R. Kellar	399
The Pied Piper, Junior. A Story The Exciting Tale of Elmer and the Kansas Rats	Damon Runyon	407
The Road. A Serial Story. I A Romance of Americans in the Balkans	Frank Savile	415
Almy's Luck. A Story	Maude Leonard Towson	435
The Albatross. A Story	William Hope Hodgson	437
The Lost Treasures of Europe. An Article Gold and Jewels Still Waiting to be Found by Some Modern Adventurer	Buffington Phillips	444
The House in the Deep Shadow. A Story A "Gray Ghost" Story	Muriel A. Pollexfen	449
Sir John Hawkwood. A Serial Story. IV A Tale of the White Company in Italy	Marion Polk Angellotti	459
The Planters' Plate. A Story	Theodore Goodridge Roberts	476
McQuinn, Sheriff. A Story The Story of a Quiet Man	William Tillinghast Eldridge	482
The Price of a Pearl. A Story	Frances R. Sterrett	487
Single-Handed Yachting. An Article A Sport for the Truly Adventurous	Talbot Mundy	497
The White Sheep. A Story	Frank Condon	505
The Freeing of Louis Bedore. A Story A Tale of the Newfoundland Fishers	Charles Tretheway	510
Mollie. A Story	G. W. Ogden	518
One Chance in a Thousand. A Complete Novelette	William Wallace Cook	525
Headings and Decorations	Harry Townsend	

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ADVENTURE for AUGUST

Fact and Fiction —All Good

Have you any money? Have you ever had any? Do you ever expect to have any? Have you ever bought any mining stocks with it? And did you win or lose? Do you ever expect to buy any? And do you expect to win—or lose?

If you are interested in knowing either *How it happened* or *What are your chances?* and if you have any interest in the money-game whatever, probably you are already reading ***"My Adventures with Your Money,"*** George Graham Rice's series of articles in ***ADVENTURE,*** and are getting a real look-in behind the scenes in high finance and mine-promotion. All we have to say is that Mr. Rice's article for August is the best yet. It takes us to the great boom-camp at Rawhide, where other bubble fortunes expanded and burst. Then he comes to Wall Street, the real center of get-rich-quick-finance, where begins the most spectacular part of his career and where his revelations become most significant.

It may be that Mr. Rice's revelations will some day save you a little pile of cold, hard, real money. It costs you only fifteen cents to take out the insurance.

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If you want a good laugh, read ***"Frazzled Friskies,"*** by John A. Heffernan, another tale about Jake Buchmuller and Harold Armitage, or chuckle over ***"The Passing of the Pals,"*** by Hiram Moe Greene, or ***"The Houseboat Sweepstakes,"*** by Fred Squire Brown.

If you want strong stories about strong men, you'll find them in ***"The Master,"*** by George Buchanan Fife, a tale of one man's splendid courage; in ***"The Voice of the Dead,"*** Lincoln Colcord's story of the Spanish Main; in Talbot Mundy's story of the Indian Mutiny, and in others of equal grip.

And there are plenty more, among them another of Muriel A. Pollexfen's "Gray Ghost" airship stories, ***"The Conjurer of the Clouds;"*** a complete novelette, and the opening instalment of a stunning serial story of American adventure and romance in Iceland, ***"Forbidden Treasure."***

If you want Summer reading, vacation reading, home reading, train reading, day or night reading, indoors or out, try an adventure in

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July 1911

Vol. 2 No. 3

My Adventures with your Money

IV
The Greenwater Fiasco.—The Crash at Goldfield

by George Graham Rice

EDITOR'S NOTE—In this series of articles Mr. Rice makes noteworthy revelations of the utmost value to a wide circle of readers—the inside story of the mining-stock game. It is not merely that he reveals what has gone on in the past. He gives lessons for the present and the future, lessons taught by the dramatic events of the bonanza camps of the Western deserts. This month it is the collapse of the booms at Greenwater and Goldfield and the failure of the Sullivan Trust Company, a failure that left the author as broke as he was on the day he drifted westward from New York. Next month he is rich again at Rawhide, in some ways the most picturesque of all the boom camps. This brings him to New York, to Wall Street, to the real center of Get-Rich-Quick Finance, where his experiences become the most spectacular of all in his varied career, his fame the widest, and his revelations the most significant.

IT WAS early in November, 1906. Indian Summer held Goldfield in its soft embrace. Nature wore that golden livery which one always associates with the idea of abundance. The mines of the district were being gutted of their treasures at the rate of $1,000,000 a month. Under the high pressure of the short-term leasing system new high records of production were being made. The population was 15,000. Bank deposits totaled $15,000,000. Real estate on Main Street commanded $1,000 a front foot. The streets were full of people. Every one had money.

In years gone by men had died of thirst on that very spot. Three years before there were no mines and the population numbered only a corporal's guard. The transformation was complete. Within three years the dreams of the lusty trail-blazers, who had

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braved the perils of the desert to locate the district, had become a towering reality. The camp, which two years before was dubbed by financial writers of the press as a "raw prospect" and a "haven for wildcatters and gamblers," had developed bonanza proportions. The early boast of Goldfield's press bureau, that Goldfield would prove to be the greatest gold camp in the United States, was an accomplished fact.

Listed Goldfield mining issues showed an enhancement in the markets of nearly $150,000,000. Stocks of neighboring camps had increased in market value $50,000,000 more. The camp rode complacently on the crest of the big boom, than which history chronicles no greater since the famous old days of Mackay, Fair, Flood and O'Brien on the Comstock.

There was no premonition that a climax must be reached in climbing values at some period, and that the collapse might be near.

Goldfield Consolidated shares were selling on the exchanges at above par, $10, or at a market valuation of more than $36,000,000 for the issued capitalization of the company. You could have bought all of the properties of this company for less than $150,000 when the camp was first located. A score of leasers were operating the Consolidated's properties. The leases were soon to expire. Much market capital was made of the fact that the company would presently "come into its own."

More than 175 stocks of Goldfield and near-by camps were listed on the exchanges and curbs. All of these were selling at sensational prices and enjoyed a swimming market. The successful merging by Wingfield and Nixon of the principal producing properties of Goldfield at a $36,000,000 valuation, more than four times the value of the known ore-reserves, stimulated the whole list.

Columbia Mountain, promoted by the mergerers of Goldfield Consolidated, but excluded from the merger because not contiguous to the other integrals and because it had no ore, had been ballooned to $1.35 per share on a million-share capitalization, and stood firm in the market regardless of the fact that it was still only an unpromising "prospect." The issued stock of a dozen other companies in control of the promoters of the merger was selling at an aggregate value of many millions more. The most despised "pup" in this particular group was Milltown, of not even prospective value; yet it easily commanded a per-share price that gave the "property" a market valuation of $400,000.

Silver Pick, capitalized for 1,000,000 shares of the par value of $1 each, had scored an uninterrupted advance from 15 cents to $2.65 a share without a pound of ore being found on the property. The market price did not waver.

Kewanas, another million-share company, was in big demand at $2.25 per share, a valuation of $2,250,000 for the property and an advance of 2,250 per cent. over the promotion price. Kewanas's gain was also made despite the fact that mine developments had failed to open up pay ore in commercial quantities. Eight months earlier the entire acreage had been offered to me for $35,000 and I had refused to buy.

Goldfield Daisy, promoted by Frank Horton, a faro dealer in George Wingfield's Tonopah gambling joint, had been ballooned from 15 cents to $6 a share on a capitalization of 1,500,000 shares. It had never earned a dollar for stockholders, but was actually selling in the open market at a valuation of $9,000,000. The price showed no sign of weakening.

Combination Fraction, owning a few acres of ground, which was promoted at 20 cents a share on a capitalization of 1,000,000 shares, had risen rapidly, because of ore discoveries and contiguity to the Mohawk, to $8.50 a share. Stockholders gave no sign of a tendency to unload.

Great Bend, situated in the Diamondfield section of the Goldfield district, four miles from the productive zone, had been carried up from 10 cents a share to $2.50 without a mine being opened up, establishing a market valuation for the property of $2,500,000.

These are but a few of the more striking instances of price appreciation. All of these stocks, excepting Goldfield Consolidated, are now selling for a few pennies per share each, the average not being so much as ten cents. There were over a hundred other Goldfield stocks that also enjoyed spectacular market careers, on which it is now impossible to get any quotation at all.

THE RISE OF WINGFIELD AND NIXON

ANY one in Goldfield who was willing to admit that stocks were selling too high at the time was decried as a "knocker."

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You could borrow freely on all listed Goldfield stocks at John S. Cook & Company's bank, owned by the promoters of the Goldfield Consolidated, and the men of the camp for that reason felt that there must be concrete value behind nearly all of them. Brokers in Eastern cities reported that few of their customers were willing to take profits even at the prices to which stocks had been skyrocketed. Most mining-stock brokers of the cities had "knocked" the stocks of the camp in the early days before the advance. At this stage, when prices had reached undreamed-of levels, the brokers did not advise their customers that values had been worked up far beyond intrinsic worth. Indeed, they actually waxed enthusiastic in their recommendations to buy. Every one was a bull.

Sessions of the Goldfield Stock Exchange reflected the extent of the craze. Outside of the exchange the stridulous, whooping, screeching, detonating voices of the brokers that kept carrying the market up at each session could be heard half a block away. Later, did you find your way into the crowded board-room, the half-crazed manner in which note-books, arms, fists, index fingers, hats and heads tossed and swayed approached in frenzy a scene of violence "to which madness might at once be the consummation and the curse."

George Wingfield and his partner, George S. Nixon, were the heroes of the hour. Less than five years before, Mr. Wingfield had come into Tonopah with a stake of $150, supplied by Mr. Nixon, whose home was in Winnemucca, Nevada. Mr. Wingfield had formerly been an impecunious cowboy-gambler. Born in the backwoods of Oregon, he hailed from Golconda, a mining camp near Winnemucca. Mr. Nixon, at the time he staked Mr. Wingfield and until his election as a United States Senator in 1904, was known as the "State Agent" of the Southern Pacific Company for Nevada, having succeeded on the job the notorious "Black" Wallace, who for many years handled the "yellow-dog" fund for the Huntington régime when franchises were hard to get and legislatures had to be bought. Mr. Nixon was also president of a bank in Winnemucca, which was a way station on the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Mr. Wingfield had signalized his money-getting prowess by running Mr. Nixon's $150 into $1,000,000 as principal owner of the Tonopah Club, the biggest gambling house in Tonopah, and later "parlaying" the money for himself and partner into ownership of control of the merged $36,000,000 Goldfield Consolidated, which was their corporate creation.

Mr. Wingfield was said to be behind the market. He was looked upon as boss of the mining partnership, and Mr. Nixon as a circumstance. Mr. Wingfield was a conspicuous figure at nearly all the sessions of the Goldfield Stock Exchange, of which he was a member. In the early evenings, when informal sessions were held on the curb, he could also be seen in the thick of the tumult. He was on the job at all hours.

AT THAT time Mr. Wingfield was about thirty years old. Of stinted, meager frame, his was the extreme pallor that denoted ill health, years of hardship, or careless habits. His eyes were watery, his look vacillating. Uncouth, cold of manner, and taciturn of disposition, he was the last man whom an observer would readily imagine to be the possessor of abilities of a superior order. In and around the camp he was noted for secretiveness. He was rated a cool, calculating, selfish, sure-thing gambler-man-of-affairs—the kind who uses the backstairs, never trusts anybody, is willing to wait a long time to accomplish a set purpose, keeps his mouth closed, and does not allow trifling scruples to stand in the way of final encompassment. Among stud-poker players who patronized gaming tables in Tonopah, Goldfield and Bullfrog, he was famed for a half-cunning expression of countenance which deceived his opponents into believing he was bluffing when he wasn't. In card games he was usually a consistent winner.

His partner, George S. Nixon, looked the part of the dapper little Winnemucca bank manager and confidential State Agent of the Southern Pacific that he was before becoming Senator. He was considerably below middle weight, and above middle girth at that part of his anatomy which a political enemy once described as "seat of his thoughts and tabernacle of his aspirations." His steel-gray eyes were absolutely without expression. Newly-rich, his money and his Southern Pacific connections had gained him a toga, but he did not carry himself like a man upon whom the honors had been thrust. Around Goldfield he strutted

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with the pride and gravity of a Spanish grandee.

The pair were in control of the mine, bank and market situation. Brokers, bank men and officers of mining companies waited upon them and did their bidding. At night, in the Montezuma Club, where leading citizens were wont to congregate, Mr. Wingfield would on occasion ostentatiously offer to wager that Goldfield Consolidated "would sell at $15 before $9," etc. Men with money who had flocked to the camp from every direction listened in rapt attention. At a later hour they secretly wired the news to their friends in the East. Next morning the market would reflect more public buying and still higher prices. Goldfield itself was blindly following the lead of the twain. It was indeed easier for these men to mark prices up than to put them down.

THE WINNINGS OF A TENDERFOOT

WHAT about me? Where did I stand and what was my position at this conjuncture? Did I have foresight? Did I realize that stocks were selling at much higher prices than were warranted by intrinsic worth and speculative value? Was not the fact that the mergerers and waterers of Goldfield Consolidated were in command of the mine, market and bank situation sufficient to make me suspect that possibly the cards might be stacked and that maybe cards were being dealt from the bottom of the deck? 'Tis a pity hindsight were not foresight, for only in that event could I laurel-wreath myself.

I had been on the ground for more than two years. In reality I was still a tenderfoot. My experiences had been unique—all on the constructive side. I had mastered the first rudiments of the game, but only the first. Intrinsic value didn't figure as the only item in my conception of the worth of any Goldfield mining issue. The millionaires of the camp were not miners by profession and their judgment of the value of any mining property would not have influenced a Guggenheim, a Ryan or a Rothschild to expend so much as $4 on the development of any piece of likely mineral ground. Goldfield was a poor man's camp. And it was making good despite the croakings of a few school-trained engineers who had turned the district down in the early days, as they did Tonopah.

At this period I was living frugally. I did not drink and never touched a card. I worked at my desk on an average of sixteen hours a day, including Sunday, and I never relaxed. Although I had arrived in the camp broke, had I been offered $2,000,000 for my half interest in the L. M. Sullivan Trust Company I think I should have refused it.

I liked my job. The leaven of my environment appealed directly to my perceptions. I was saturated with the traditions of Western "mining luck" and also with the optimism of my sturdy neighbors. These men had stood their ground in the early period of the camp's days of "trial and tribulation." They had triumphed like their forebears on the Comstock, just as did the hardy pioneers of Leadville and Cripple Creek and as their brethren of Tonopah did. Their influence over me was unbounded. I relished the work, anyhow. As a matter of fact, I had little use for money except for the purposes of business. *And never a suggestion came to me that it was time for a "clean up."*

The L. M. Sullivan Trust Company, of which I was vice-president and general manager, was doing remarkably well. The stocks of the mining companies that were organized and promoted by the trust company were listed on the San Francisco Stock Exchange and New York Curb and showed a market appreciation of $3,000,000 above the promotion prices. Indian Camp, promoted at 25 cents, was selling freely at $1.30. Jumping Jack, for which subscriptions were originally accepted at 25 cents, was in hot demand at 62 cents. Stray Dog, sold to the public originally at 45 cents, was active around 85 cents. Lou Dillon Goldfield, put out less than a month before at 25 cents, had worked its way up to 64 cents. Silver Pick Extension, which was oversubscribed at 25 cents and commanded 35 cents two hours after we announced that subscriptions were closed, was selling on the exchanges and curbs of the country at 49 cents. Eagle's Nest Fairview, which original subscribers got into at 35 cents, was very much wanted at 65 cents. Fairview Hailstone, floated at 25 cents, was in constant demand at 40 cents.

Governor John Sparks was now president of all of these companies.

YOU could have sold big blocks of the Sullivan stocks at these profit-making prices on any of the mining exchanges and curb markets of the country without reducing the price a cent, so con-

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stant was the public demand and so broad was the market. With the exception of Bullfrog Rush, for which the Sullivan Trust Company had refunded the money to subscribers when the mine under development proved to be a "lemon," every promotion of the trust company showed investors a handsome stock-market profit. In the aggregate the promotion price of the seven Sullivan mining companies figured $2,000,000 for the entire capitalization. The market price of these was now $5,000,000, or an average gain of 150 per cent.

It was a record to be proud of, and I *was* proud of it, not alone because I was vice-president and general manager of the trust company, but also because a firm of expert accountants, recommended by the American National Bank of San Francisco to examine the books of the trust company, had reported that our assets were $3,000,000 in excess of liabilities, all of which had been gathered in about ten months' time. About $1,000,000 of this represented promotion profits. The remainder was earned by the appreciation in price of mining securities carried or accumulated through the boom.

It was the common boast of the camp that George Wingfield had "parlayed" or "pyramided" $1,000,000, which represented the profits of his gambling place in Tonopah, into ownership of control, along with his partner Nixon, of the $36,000,000 Goldfield Consolidated. I had experienced a lot of hard luck in missing by a hair's breadth, as related in ADVENTURE for June, ownership of the Hayes-Monnette lease on the Mohawk and the Nevada Hills mine, which would have increased our profits $8,000,000 more, but I felicitated myself that I had done very well by pyramiding $2,500 into a half interest in a flourishing $3,000,000 trust company. I was vain enough to believe that my achievement was as unique as that of Mr. Wingfield, because he had had the influence of a United States Senator and the money deposited in a chain of newly established banks in Goldfield, Tonopah and other points to aid him in his operations. Against this I had not only been compelled to rely on my own resources, but was actually required to combat the work of blackmailers who from time to time attempted to levy tribute. On my failure to "come through" (I thought it cowardly to give up) they never hesitated to take a malevolent smash at the Sullivan Trust Company, because in years gone by its active head happened to have had a youthful Past, even though they knew that Past was no longer his and he had "passed it like milestones on the way."

GREENWATER AND GREED

WHEN the excitement was at fever-heat in Goldfield over the stupendous rises in market value of Goldfield securities which were being chronicled hourly, news came to town of the successful flotation in New York of the Greenwater & Death Valley Mining Company. The capitalization was 3,000,000 shares of the par value of $1 each. The stock had been underwritten at $1 a share by New York and Pittsburg Stock Exchange houses, had been listed on the New York Curb, and had climbed to around $5.50, or a valuation for the property of $16,500,000. Among the officers of this company were M. R. Ward, brother-in-law of Charles M. Schwab; T. L. Oddie, now Governor of Nevada, and Malcolm Macdonald, now president of the Nevada First National Bank of Tonopah.

Greenwater is situated about 150 miles south of Goldfield, across the State line in California. No one ever went to or fro without passing through Goldfield. If there was a Greenwater boom, how was it that we in Goldfield, who were in touch with all Nevada mining affairs, did not know about it? Goldfield promoters began to sit up and pay attention. Soon they caught the infection. A stampede from Goldfield into Greenwater ensued. In fact, people flocked to Greenwater from every direction. A bunch of Tonopah money-getters, headed by the indomitable Malcolm Macdonald, were grabbing the money on Greenwaters in New York, and Goldfield was not in the play.

The reports that came from Greenwater as a result of the first stampede from Goldfield were of doubtful variety. Greenwater & Death Valley was described as a raw prospect not worth over 10 cents per share. Goldfield people shook their heads. There was no gainsaying the fact, however, that Greenwater & Death Valley appeared to be a giant success in the Eastern stock markets. Charles M. Schwab was reported to be behind the flotation of Greenwater & Death Valley. Montgomery-Shoshone and Tono-

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pah Extension, two other Schwab enterprises, were selling at hundreds of per cent. profit in the stock markets. The fact that Mr. Schwab was interested in the camp was an argument that appealed with great force to Nevada promoters, for the fraternity had learned to attach just as much significance to having a market as to having a mine before commencing operations.

The Sullivan Trust Company not having had a failure of any kind on the market, I hesitated to commit the trust company to any issue in the new camp. Not to be entirely out of it, however, I sent our engineer, "Jack" Campbell, into the district to report on all the properties.

News came thick and fast from the New York market as to the success of the Greenwaters in the East. Furnace Creek Copper Company, originally promoted by "Patsy" Clark of Spokane at 25 cents per share, with a million-share capitalization, was reported to be getting the benefit of Mr. Clark's personal market handling on the New York Curb, and that stock soon reached a high quotation of $5.50. John W. Gates had been let in by "Patsy" at around 50 cents and was reported to have unloaded 400,000 shares at all sorts of prices from $1 up to $5.50, and down again.

On the heels of this advance came word of the successful promotion of the United Greenwater Company, with C. S. Minzesheimer & Company, members of the New York Stock Exchange, acting as fiscal agents for the company. The promoters were named as Malcolm Macdonald, Donald B. Gillies and Charles M. Schwab. J. C. Weir, the New York mining-stock broker, who was conducting through the mails a nation-wide market-letter campaign in favor of Greenwater, was reported to have sold 150,000 or 200,000 shares at the subscription price of $1. The offering was said to have been oversubscribed twice. The price then shot up to $2.50 on the New York Curb. The market boiled.

Philadelphia was reported to be Greenwater-mad. When United Greenwater had reached $1.50 on its way up and Greenwater & Death Valley had passed the $4 point, the Schwab crowd announced the formation of the Greenwater Copper Mines & Smelters Company to consolidate the Greenwater & Death Valley and United Greenwater companies. This new parent company was capitalized for $25,000,000, with 5,000,000 shares of the par value of $5 each, and the East was reported to be eating up the new stock "blood raw." The president of this company was Charles R. Miller, who was president of the Tonopah & Goldfield Railroad Company, and the vice-president was M. R. Ward, brother-in-law of Charles M. Schwab. The directorate included Mr. Schwab; John W. Brock, who represented Philadelphia interests on the directorate of the Tonopah Mining Company; Malcolm Macdonald, the champion "lemon" peddler of Nevada; Frank Keith, general manager of the Tonopah Mining Company, and others. It was a "swell" directorate.

It was learned that the stock of the new company had been underwritten by New York Stock Exchange houses, principally those with Philadelphia and Pittsburg branches, where the Schwab crowd was influential, at $1.80 per share, and that large blocks were being sold to the public at up to $3.25 on the New York Curb, a valuation for the "properties" of more than $16,000,000.

GETTING INTO THE GAME

THE birth of the $25,000,000 merger, to take in two properties that had not yet matriculated even in the baby-mine class and were actually suspected at the outset by mining men in Goldfield to be wildcats, was the signal for an outpouring in quick succession of Greenwater promotions from all centers, of which the annals of the industry in this country chronicle no counterpart.

At the height of the boom there was promoted out of Los Angeles and New York the Furnace Creek Consolidated Copper Company, with a capitalization of $5,000,000.

From Butte, home of the copper-mining industry, the Furnace Creek Extension Copper Mining Company was promoted, with a capitalization of $5,000,000, and also the Butte & Greenwater, capitalized for $1,500,000. Malcolm Macdonald, the "hero" of Montgomery-Shoshone at Bullfrog, hailed from Butte. He it was who interested the Schwab crowd in Greenwater, as he did in Tonopah and Bullfrog.

"Patsy" Clark, the noted mine operator of Spokane, having prospered marketwise with his Furnace Creek Copper Company, promptly headed a new one, the Furnace Valley Copper Company, with a capitalization of $6,250,000. These shares were listed on the Spokane, Butte and Los Angeles

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Stock Exchanges, but did not appear on the New York Curb.

IN SAN FRANCISCO crowd of brokers and stock-market operators organized the Greenwater Bimetallic Copper Company. "They let her go Gallagher" with a capitalization of $1,000,000.

The C. M. Sumner Investment Securities Company of Denver opened subscriptions for the Greenwater-Death Valley Copper Company. (The title of this company was a play on the name of the Greenwater & Death Valley Copper Company.)

Tonopah citizens, not to be outdone, sallied forth with the Greenwater Calumet, incorporated for $1,500,000. Hon. T. L. Oddie, now Governor of Nevada, then of Tonopah, and his brother, C. M. Oddie, followed the lead and headed the Greenwater Arcturus Copper Mining Company, with a capitalization of $3,000,000.

The Consolidated Greenwater Copper Company was fed to the hungry public out of the Pittsburg trough, with general offices in the Keystone Bank Building, and with a high-class Tonopah crowd on the directorate. Eugene Howell, cashier of the Tonopah Banking Corporation, of which United States Senator Nixon is president, was treasurer. John A. Kirby, of Salt Lake City, until recently associated with George Wingfield in the ownership of Nevada Hills, was president.

Arthur Kunze, who had sold the control of the Greenwater & Death Valley Copper Company to Malcolm Macdonald, who in turn had interested the Schwab coterie in the organization, put out a new one called the Greenwater Copper Mining Company, with a capitalization of $5,000,000.

H. T. Bragdon, formerly president of the Goldfield Mining Company, which is one of the integrals of the Goldfield Consolidated, headed the Greenwater Black Jack Copper Mining Company, with a capitalization of $1,000,000.

ALL THE COPPER IN THE WORLD

UNITED STATES Senator George S. Nixon of Nevada lent his name, along with H. H. Clark, William Bayley and H. J. Woollacott, as a director of the Greenwater Furnace Creek Copper Company, with a capitalization of $1,500,000. The prospectus of this company announced that the ores were "melaconite, azurite, chalcocite, and occasionally chrysocolla, averaging 18 to 36 per cent. (copper) tenor."

"Taking the lowest percentage of ore reported by the company," says Horace Stevens in the *Copper Handbook* of 1908, "and the company's own figures as to the size of its ore-bodies, the first 100 feet in depth on this wonderful property would carry upward of 20,000,000 tons of refined copper, worth, at 13 cents per pound, the comparatively trifling sum of five billion, two hundred million dollars."

Mr. Stevens goes on: "The fact that a Major is manager of this company, and a United States Senator is vice-president, will prove a great consolation to the shareholders. It is indeed lamentable to note that this magnificent mine, which carries, according to the company's own statements, more copper than all the developed copper mines of the world, is idle, and present office address a mystery."

Donald Mackenzie, of Goldfield, promoter of the successful Frances-Mohawk Mining & Leasing Company at Goldfield, which netted over $1,500,000 from Mohawk ores, and distributed all of 20 per cent. of this amount to stockholders in the shape of dividends, pushed out the Greenwater Red Boy Copper Company and the Greenwater Saratoga Copper Company, with a capitalization of $1,000,000 each. Thomas B. Rickey, president of the State Bank & Trust Company of Goldfield, Tonopah and Carson City, was president of both of these companies, and J. L. ("God-Bless-You") Lindsey, cashier of the State Bank & Trust Company, was treasurer.

Greenwater Consolidated, Greenwater Copper, Furnace Creek Oxide Copper, Greenwater Black Oxide Copper, Greenwater California Copper, Greenwater Polaris Copper, Greenwater Pay Copper, Pittsburg and Greenwater Copper, Greenwater Copper Range, Greenwater Ely Consolidated, Greenwater Sunset, New York & Greenwater, Greenwater Etna, Greenwater Superior, Greenwater Victor, Greenwater Ibex, Greenwater Vindicator, Greenwater Prospectors', Greenwater El Capitan, Greenwater & Death Valley Extension, Greenwater Copper Queen, Greenwater Helmet, Tonopah Greenwater, Furnace Creek Gold & Copper, and Greenwater Willow Creek were the names of a

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score of others with capitalizations ranging all the way from $1,000,000 to $5,000,000 each.

Among these the Greenwater Willow Creek Copper Company boasted of the fanciest directorate. George A. Bartlett, Nevada's lone Congressman, was president, and Richard Sutro, then head of the world-known New York banking house of Sutro Bros. & Co., was advertised as first vice-president. Henry E. Epstine, the popular Tonopah broker, was second vice-president, and Alonzo Tripp, general manager of the Tonopah & Goldfield Railroad, was a director.

Did I fall for Greenwater? Yes, and at the eleventh hour.

On the half-hearted recommendation of the trust company's engineer, "Jack" Campbell, the L. M. Sullivan Trust Company paid $125,000 for a property in Greenwater that boasted of two ten-foot holes. On two sides it adjoined the property of the Furnace Creek Copper Company, the original location in the camp. Our engineer reported that if "Patsy" Clark's Furnace Creek Copper Company, whose shares were selling in the market at a valuation of $5,500,000 for the property, had any ore, we certainly could not miss it. No matter which way the veins trended, our ground must be as good as "Patsy's," because the identical vein formation passed through both properties.

The Sullivan Trust Company thereupon incorporated the Furnace Creek South Extension Copper Company to operate the property. The capitalization was 1,250,000 shares of the par value of $1, of which 500,000 shares were placed in the treasury of the company to be sold for purposes of mine development.

New York Stock Exchange houses having the call as purveyors of this particular line of goods, the Sullivan Trust Company tendered the selling agency of Furnace Creek South Extension treasury stock to E. A. Manice & Company, members of the New York Stock Exchange, whose offices are located in the same building in New York as J. P. Morgan & Company. We offered for public subscription 100,000 shares of treasury stock at par, $1, through E. A. Manice & Company, and this firm advertised the offering in New York newspapers over their own signature. The Sullivan Trust Company paid the bills.

THE COLLAPSE OF GREENWATER

THE offering turned out to be a "bloomer," the first the Sullivan Trust Company had met with. E. A. Manice & Company did not dispose of as many as 30,000 shares. Neither did the stock offered later by the Sullivan Trust Company through brokers in other cities sell freely. Just at the moment when we announced our offering of Furnace Creek South Extension the Greenwater boom began to crack.

Oscar Adams Turner, who promoted the Tonopah Mining Company of Nevada, which has paid $7,250,000 in dividends on a capitalization of $1,000,000, is responsible for the bursting of the bubble. Mr. Turner had invested in the Greenwater camp on the reports of an engineer. He organized the Greenwater Central Copper Company. Then he decided that it was advisable for him to take a look at the property for himself. He visited Greenwater. Two hours after arriving in camp he sent a telegram to Philadelphia reading substantially as follows:

> Stop offering Greenwater Central. Make no more payments on the property. Do not use my name any further. There is nothing here.

The tenor of the message leaked out. Indiscriminate selling ensued, by a noted bank crowd in Philadelphia who were loaded up with Greenwaters. Others followed suit. The market became sick.

At the first sign of a market setback inquiries began to pour into Nevada from all over the East, and noted copper experts from Montana, Arizona, California and other points came piling into the Greenwater camp to examine the properties. Soon a chorus of adverse opinion found its way into every financial center. Market values crumbled as rapidly as they had risen. The carnage was awful!.

I make a conservative statement when I say that the American public sank fully $30,000,000 in Greenwater in less than four months.

Not all of the Greenwater promotions were over-subscribed—not half, not a quarter—and the American public may well congratulate itself that the boom "busted" when only approximately $30,000,000 had passed into the pockets of the promoters.

What of the camp?

It exists no more. All mine development

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work ceased long ago. There are green-stained carbonates on the surface, but there are no copper ore-bodies. The "mines" have been dismantled of their machinery and other equipment, and not even a lone watchman remains to point out to the desert-wayfarer the spot on which was reared *the monumental mining-stock swindle of the century*. Every dollar invested by the public is lost. The dry, hot winds of the sand-swept desert now chant the requiem.

Fix the responsibility here if you can. The job is not easy. Let me attempt it. The buccaneers who took Greenwater & Death Valley down to New York and allowed the public to subscribe for it with the name of Charles M. Schwab as a lure, at a valuation for the property of more than $3,000,000, and then ballooned the price on the curb until the shares sold at a valuation of $16,-500,000 for the property, without an assured mining success in sight in the entire camp—these men, in my opinion, were criminally responsible. They have never been called to account.

Members of the New York Stock Exchange who aided and abetted them by lending their names to the transaction, and Charles M. Schwab, who permitted the use of his name and that of his brother-in-law, are morally responsible. Not for an instant do I entertain the thought that the Stock Exchange crowd and Mr. Schwab realized that the mines of the company were absolutely valueless, but I do maintain that men of their standing and prestige have opportunities which men of smaller caliber do not enjoy and that their conduct for this reason was reprehensible to an extreme.

THE SHAME AND THE BLAME

I CITE the instance of the Sullivan Trust Company "falling" for Greenwater, after hesitating about embarking on the enterprise for weeks, and I am convinced that others fell the same way. The Sullivan Trust Company did not touch a Greenwater property until its clients and its clientele among the brokers throughout the Union had burned up the wires with requests for a Greenwater promotion, and when it did finally "fall" it lost its own money, the only other sufferers being a handful of investors who at the tail-end of the boom subscribed for a comparatively small block of treasury stock.

Not all of the promoters "fell" innocently, however. There were half-baked promoters and mining-stock brokers in almost every city in the Union who had witnessed the enhancement in values during the Goldfield boom, and whose palms had itched for the "long green" that for so long came the way of men on the ground. These, at the first signal that the Greenwater boom was on, with Charles M. Schwab in the saddle, lost no time in annexing ground in the district with the single view of incorporating companies and retailing the stock to the public at thousands of per cent. profit.

The Greenwater mining-boom fiasco stands in a class by itself as an example of mining-stock pitfalls. The only Greenwater stock which at this time has a market quotation is Greenwater Mines & Smelters, which reflects the true state of the public mind regarding all Greenwaters by actually selling at a valuation of less than the amount of money in the company's treasury—6 cents per share on an outstanding issue of 3,000,000 shares—there being $189,000 in the treasury, along with an I. O. U. of C. S. Minzesheimer & Company, the "busted" New York Stock Exchange house, for $71,000, of which the company will realize 27 cents on the dollar through the receiver.

GOLD AND POLITICS IN NEVADA

THE Nevada State election took place in November. The Democratic ticket, headed by "Honest" John Sparks for Governor and Denver S. Dickerson for Lieutenant-Governor, was victorious. The Republican ticket, headed by J. F. Mitchell, a mining promoter and engineer, backed by United States Senator Nixon, the Republican political boss, suffered humiliating defeat.

Denver S. Dickerson was the candidate of the labor unions. During a former labor war in Cripple Creek Mr. Dickerson had been confined in the "bull-pen" when the Government intervened to quell the labor riots there. Goldfield miners to a man very naturally voted for him. Governor Sparks had accepted the renomination at the urgent request of the L. M. Sullivan Trust Company, and his victory, as well as the complexion of the ticket, was credited largely to the activities in politics of the trust company.

The trust company, while not a banking

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institution in the sense that it accepted deposits of cash from citizens of the town, having confined its operations to the financing of mining enterprises, loomed large on the political and business horizon because of its increasing financial and political power. The trust company carried all of its moneys in banks that were not affiliated with the Wingfield-Nixon confederacy and worked at cross-purposes with it in this particular, too.

The Wingfield-Nixon crowd had pyramided a gambling house in Tonopah and a little one-horse bank in Winnemucca into ownership of control of the $36,000,000 Goldfield Consolidated; into ownership of John S. Cook & Company's bank in Goldfield, which was credited with deposits aggregating $8,000,000; into a new bank in Tonopah, known as the Tonopah Banking Corporation, and into a newly formed bank in Reno, called the Nixon National. In politics it had succeeded in seating Mr. Nixon in the United States Senate, placing at his command the Federal patronage which goes with that exalted office.

The confederacy was reaching out.

In Goldfield it had overcome such strong banking opposition as the Nye & Ormsby County Bank and the State Bank & Trust Company, both of which were in business before John S. Cook & Company were dreamed of. It had accomplished this by loaning large sums of money to Goldfield brokers and other citizens on mining stocks of the camp at a time when this class of securities was not so readily accepted by the other banks as good collateral. In Tonopah the newly-established Nixon bank, known as the Tonopah Banking Corporation, was making gradual headway against both the Nye & Ormsby and the State Bank & Trust Company, which still carried about 75 per cent. of the business of that camp. In Reno the Nixon National found it hard to compete with such old institutions as the Bank of Nevada, the Washoe County Bank and the Farmers & Merchants National, but rumors were already in the air that the Nixon bank was soon to buy out and consolidate with the powerful Bank of Nevada.

In Goldfield the power of the confederacy was strongest in all lines except politics. There it already had its grasp on the throat of the mining and financial business of the camp, and through the out-of-town draft collection department of its bank held its finger on the pulse of all mining-share markets. Its sore spot was politics.

Wingfield and Nixon's market operations were clouded in mystery. No one knew exactly where they stood. Brokers in Goldfield and San Francisco, who had compared notes, were convinced that the two had unloaded many millions of shares of the smaller companies not included in the merger, and had raked in not less than $10,000,000 during the boom as the result of this selling. The disposal of huge blocks of stock by Wingfield and Nixon, however, was not interpreted as meaning that stocks were selling too high. The general idea prevailed that the proceeds were used to enable the confederacy to finance its stock purchases in the integral companies that were turned over in the making of the merger and to finance its new chain of banks.

ABOUT the middle of November the market for Goldfield securities took a turn for the bad. Prices gave indication of having reached a stopping place. Goldfield promoters began to complain that they were compelled to lend strong support to the market because of selling from many quarters that could not be explained. There was much market pressure. In a few days the market became unsteady, then soft, then wobbly again. In camp Wingfield and Nixon were reported still bullish.

The securities of the Sullivan Trust Company were under attack in all markets. Salt Lake and San Francisco were reported to be spilling stock. Great blocks were being thrown over.

I gave support in a jiffy.

There was no surcease.

Within ten days I was forced to throw all of a million dollars behind the market to hold it.

This didn't faze me. I was getting stock certificates for the money, and I believed they were worth the price.

But I was puzzled to determine what it was all about.

THE BEGINNING OF THE RAID

SOON it was reported to me that Senator Nixon was advising people at all points who held Sullivan stocks, or knew of anybody who held them, to unload. From San Francisco came word that a clique of brokers was operating for the decline.

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On the following Monday the market on the San Francisco Stock Exchange opened strong and buoyant, and it looked for a moment as if the selling movement had collapsed. I felt relieved.

My 'phone bell rang. A stock broker of Tonopah called me on the long distance.

"Offer you 10,000 Lou Dillon at 48," he said. "Do you want them?"

Lou Dillon was a Sullivan stock that had been promoted at 25; 48 was now a point under the market, however.

"We'll take 'em," I said. "What's the matter?"

"Rumored up here that your books are under inspection by the Postoffice Department. You have had five new men on your books for the past few weeks, and some one has spread a story here that Nixon has sicked the Government on to you."

I denied it, of course. The five men in question were the experts who had been sent up from San Francisco by the firm of accountants recommended to us by the American National Bank, and they were there at our own behest. The story was a raw canard.

Throughout the day the Sullivan Trust Company was called upon to stand behind the San Francisco market and take in nearly all of the big blocks of Sullivan stocks owned in the camps of Tonopah and Manhattan. Before our denials could reach the sellers the damage had been done. And it took $250,000 a day for four days to hold the market against this fresh onslaught.

Color had been lent to the wild rumors about a Postal investigation by the fact that an attack had been made on me in the columns of the *Denver Mining Record* a year before. Rumor said the dose was going to be repeated. In the early days of the camp, when I was at the head of the Goldfield-Tonopah Advertising Agency, I had represented the *Denver Mining Record* in Goldfield. As its agent I had secured advertising contracts for it which netted my agency in the neighborhood of $10,000 a year in commissions. The owners of the newspaper conceived the idea that I was making too much money on a commission basis and sent Wing B. Allen, formerly of Salt Lake, to the scene to take my place. Mr. Allen worked for smaller pay. He wanted me to divide my commission on standing business, and I refused. The publishers took Mr. Allen's part. As a result I withdrew all the advertising from the columns of the *Denver Mining Record* for which my agency had been responsible, and the *Denver Mining Record* was never able to regain the lost ground.

A short time before the raid on our stocks began Mr. Allen had been arrested in Goldfield on a warrant sworn out by L. M. Sullivan, tried before Judge Bell on the charge of extortion and bound over to the Grand Jury. At the hearing before Judge Bell the Sullivan Trust Company submitted evidence that Mr. Allen had threatened, if we did not give his paper a slice of the promotion advertising of the Sullivan Trust Company, that the *Denver Mining Record* would commence to attack me personally in its columns, and, because of my early Past, would do the trust company serious damage.

At the hearing despatches were submitted which were filed at the Goldfield office of the Western Union Telegraph Company by Mr. Allen, in which he had informed his paper that it had better proceed with the attack, because neither Mr. Sullivan nor myself gave indication of yielding. At the hearing, under oath and in a crowded courtroom, I openly denounced Mr. Allen and his newspaper as blackmailers of the very vilest type, and so did Mr. Sullivan. Judge Bell, on the submission by the Western Union of Mr. Allen's despatches to his paper, promptly held him for the Grand Jury.

On the advice of former Governor Thomas, of Colorado, to whom the Sullivan Trust Company paid a retainer as counsel, and who later became chief counsel for the Goldfield Consolidated, I employed Christopher C. Clay of Denver to commence suit against the owners of the *Denver Mining Record*. As a result I secured from them a settlement by which they agreed not to mention my name again in their paper. I was harassed at the time, or I would not have compromised. The stuff printed by the *Denver Mining Record*, which has been rehashed by every blackmailer who ever attempted to levy on me, was about two-tenths true and eight-tenths false. It was a literal copy of an anonymous publication put out by a set of blackmailers who had tried to circulate it years before in New York when I was head of the Maxim & Gay Company. I had spent thousands of dollars to run down the authorship then, but without avail. The lawyers had succeeded in seizing thousands of copies of the publi-

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cation, and had made an arrest, but they failed to prove authorship of the screed and ownership of the paper, and the culprits therefore were not punished. In Denver when Mr. Clay applied for criminal warrants, he was asked first to furnish proof of authorship, which was impossible for us, the articles having been unsigned.

SOME PERTINENT PERSONALITIES

THE same stuff has recently appeared without signature in a Goldfield paper which originally came into possession of George Wingfield through foreclosure proceedings, and in a Reno evening paper which is controlled by Senator Nixon, who owns a large slice of the paper's mortgage. It has also appeared in other papers "friendly" to Wingfield and Nixon. Tens of thousands of copies of the Goldfield publication containing the anonymous libel have been sent broadcast.

Other newspapers have reproduced the libelous stuff, some innocently and some for sordid reasons, but of this more later. My career is fraught with instances of recourse by enemies to blackmail and attempted blackmail. If I should undertake to tabulate the cases where men and interests, ranging from impecunious newspaper reporters to financial-newspaper publishers and mining-stock brokers and market operators who, from the background, publish market letters or furnish the capital for mining publications, have attempted to levy tribute or to club me into submission by the use of so vile a weapon, I should be compelled to write a big book on the subject.

And right here I should like to place myself on record to the effect that seemingly the principal shortcoming that has marked my mining-financial career has been that I had a youthful Past—a Past which during the last decade has never been taken into serious consideration by men who have held close business relations with me, but which, of course, is a thorn in the sides of men and interests whose bidding I have failed to obey.

I defy any man to cite a single instance where I was guilty of crookedness in a mining transaction or a business transaction of any kind in my entire career as a promoter. I have been fearless—too much so. I have been a rabid enthusiast. I have tried to build. I have given quarter, but have never taken any. I have been honest. Were I really dishonest, I could have prevented every publication of an attack of consequence on me by lending myself in advance to the base purposes of my traducers, and I would have millions now for having compromised with them. It is heaven's own truth that in nine cases out of ten, when I have been attacked in print, the motive of the attacking party has been base and the facts have been so distorted or misrepresented that the fabric was a lie. Nor has the cruelty of the operation stayed any one's hand.

AT THE very moment in Goldfield when I knew that the *Denver Mining Record* would not assault the Sullivan Trust Company again because of the settlement of the libel suit by my lawyers out of court, fresh rumors were spread that the *Denver Mining Record* was getting ready for another attack and that tens of thousands of copies of that newspaper were to be circulated. But you can't stop a rumor by the declaration of the truth, and the Sullivan Trust Company decided that it would be unwise to make a denial in print, for by so doing it would communicate to all stockholders the news that the Sullivan stocks were actually under attack and thus cause more "frightened selling."

Sight drafts from brokers in New York, Chicago, Salt Lake and San Francisco, drawn on the Sullivan Trust Company, with large bundles of Sullivan stocks attached, were pouring into our office through the local banks for presentation. John S. Cook & Company made a specialty of this department of banking, and most of the drafts on us were cleared through the Wingfield-Nixon bank. It was reported to me that Senator Nixon was openly discussing the enormous volume of stocks coming in on us and was questioning our ability to stem the tide. As a strategic measure, the Sullivan Trust Company decided to "cross" sales on the San Francisco Stock Exchange so that it might ship out of the camp, through the banks, large blocks of stock with draft attached against San Francisco brokers and thus convey to the minds of local bankers that we were selling large blocks of stock as well as buying them. The volume of the "cross" trades caused some talk in San Francisco, and was magnified by brokers operating for the decline.

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THE TIME WHEN MONEY TALKS

SOME of our brokers in San Francisco now demanded an independent bank guaranty that the drafts on us would be honored. We asked for a line of credit at the State Bank & Trust Company. It was promptly given. As fast as the brokers asked for a guaranty, the State Bank & Trust Company telegraphed them formally that it would honor our paper to the extent of $20,000 or $30,000 in every case. To protect the bank and in order to be able to borrow a large sum of money, should we need it in the event of another selling movement starting in, we deposited stocks of a market value of $1,500,000 with the State Bank & Trust Company, which signed a paper that this collateral was to stand against loans for any amount which the State Bank & Trust Company might make to us on open account.

A few days later we borrowed from the bank $300,000 in cash, and it was agreed that should we need $300,000 more on the same collateral, it would be promptly placed at our disposal. We did not yet need the money, but I realized the desirability of assembling cash in an exigency such as that. Nor was this an unusual proceeding. There was a time during the Manhattan boom when the overdraft of the Sullivan Trust Company in the Nye & Ormsby County Bank was $695,000. The bank held against this overdraft Sullivan stocks at the promotion price. Nearly all of these stocks at that early period were as yet unlisted.

The idea of withdrawing support and letting the market go to smash did not occur to me at all. As already stated, I believed the stocks were worth the money. But that was not the chief reason for my stubborn market position. I took great pride in the fact that every listed stock of the Sullivan Trust Company showed a big profit to stockholders. I considered the greatest asset of the trust company to be, not its money, but its prestige, and I entertained big ideas as to a future I had mapped out for the corporation. I did not suspect that an organized campaign was on to destroy us and that the dominant interests of the camp were reaching out for everything in sight. Nor did I have any use for money for hoarding purposes. The only thing that seriously nettled me was the fact that the Sullivan Trust Company had been compelled to turn borrower.

Before the first selling movement started in, our assets were $3,000,000 more than our liabilities. But this $3,000,000 was not all cash. In fact, it was represented in part by stocks which we had purchased in the market with the idea that they were good stocks to own and would show the trust company a big profit, as they had. We could have cleaned up $3,000,000 in cash, but we had not done so. Now, within a month, all of our available cash had been put into fresh lines of our own securities, we had been compelled to sell other lines out, and the corporation was a borrower. I was stubborn—too stubborn for a man who boasted of so little experience in such a big game. It was a pet belief of mine that obstacles create character. I was in the heat of a battle and fighting my way against tremendous odds. I rather liked the sensation.

Another dominant trait which, deep down, has in recent years been the keynote of my actions is the fact that my philosophy teaches me that you can't down the truth, that a lie can't live, and that *justice will be finally done.* Had I always put the accent on the "finally" and mixed with my philosophy a little "dope" to the effect that while justice is always *finally* triumphant, injustice is often victorious *for a while,* I might have fared better.

In my contribution to ADVENTURE for June I stated that "Wall Street deals for suckers" and that "thinkers who think they know, but don't" are the suckers for which Wall Street casts its net. I also stated that Wall Street promoters realized that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing" and that this "little knowledge" leads astray this particular kind of sucker. In "falling" in Goldfield for the philosophy that "justice is always triumphant in the end," by swallowing it whole, and in making no allowance for the fact that justice is sometimes tardy, even though it does prevail in the end, I here decorate myself with a medal as a top-notcher in the *sucker* class —in the academic sense—which I have described, and which is the usual sense in which I use the term "sucker."

Again the selling ceased, and it looked as if the Sullivan Trust Company would be compelled to wait only for a general turn in the market to relieve itself of money-pressure by disposing of some of the large blocks of stock it had accumulated during the periods of heavy liquidation.

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CLOUDS IN THE WESTERN SKY

A NEW black cloud showed itself on the horizon. A labor war was threatened in Goldfield. It was very apparent, from the conduct of George Wingfield, that he was baiting the miners, and it appeared to be the general opinion of the people of Goldfield that he was trying to precipitate trouble. The miners had asked for higher wages. The Sullivan Trust Company, which was operating seven properties with a monthly pay-roll of $50,000, was the first to express a willingness to grant the terms. Wingfield and Nixon refused. The miners asked for arbitration. It was refused. The mines were then shut down for a few days and the terms of the leases were extended.

Heavy selling in all Goldfield stocks took place during the shut-down. Rumors could now be heard on every side that Wingfield and Nixon were dumping overboard big blocks of stock. Could it be possible that they themselves were scuttling the ship that had given them such glorious passage?

Again the Sullivan Trust Company was called upon to stand behind the market.

Soon a cry of distress was heard in the camp from investors and stock brokers who had overloaded themselves with securities and who were in debt to the banks to the extent of millions, with stocks of the camp put up as collateral. Inquiry revealed the fact that all Goldfield and Tonopah banks were overloaded. This condition had been brought about by the liberal terms which had been granted by the Wingfield-Nixon banks during the "ballooning" of Goldfield Consolidated, when the confederacy, according to common belief, was unloading millions of dollars' worth of stocks in the small companies and was using the proceeds to finance their purchase of the stock of several of the integrals that formed the big merger.

I began to get next to myself and to "smell a rat." I had never had so much as an argument with either Mr. Wingfield or Mr. Nixon, had never been engaged in any business transactions with them, and the campaign against the trust company, which I felt sure had been conceived at the outset in the interests of the Republican political machine, I now suspected was part of a general scheme to get hold of anything and everything that was valuable in the camp. By smashing the Sullivan Trust Company they could hurt the Democratic party of the State, with which we were affiliated, and for which it was currently believed we were supplying the sinews of war. By smashing us they might also cripple the bank with which we were doing business, and which in both Goldfield and Tonopah, particularly Tonopah, was a formidable competitor of their banking interests. And thus they might also facilitate a decline in the market which would shake out of their holdings borrowers at their banks.

I figured it out this way: Wingfield and Nixon knew that we had foolishly attempted to support the market for our stocks, that other promoters in Goldfield had done likewise, and that investors and brokers in Goldfield had borrowed heavily from all of the banks. John S. Cook & Company were calling for more collateral from their customers, and real estate was being added to the pledges of mining securities. What more easy, even though diabolical, than to "bear" the market, shake out the stockholders in various important mines of the camp, take their stocks away from them by foreclosure, and get possession again, at bankrupt-sale prices, of the millions of dollars' worth of securities which they had unloaded during the boom?

If this was the scheme of Wingfield and Nixon, what transpired could not have been patterned more perfectly.

Mr. Wingfield walked the streets day and night, armed to the teeth, and openly dared any of the miners to "get him." He threatened another shut-down, a reduction of wages, the installation of change-rooms at the mines and other dire things, all seemingly calculated to rouse the ire of the mine-workers.

The miners fell for the bait, became belligerent and nasty and did things with which the community was not in sympathy. Day by day the situation became more critical.

During one of the shut-downs which ensued, Senator Nixon revealed his hand by convening a meeting of the executive committees of the two Goldfield stock exchanges. He insisted that the exchanges close, arguing that the prices of stocks should be allowed to recede in sympathy with the labor troubles. No thought was his for the men of the camp who were committed to the long side of the market at boom prices and who had worked day and

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night to create the boom which had thrown into the laps of Wingfield and Nixon riches far beyond the dreams of avarice. The brokers refused to close the exchanges.

GOLDFIELDERS were slow to grasp the real import of what was transpiring. Things were very much unsettled. Optimism would rule to-day on apparently inspired rumors that the differences between the mine owners and the miners were about to be patched up. The next day gloom would pervade the camp because of the unfavorable action by the union on the peace plans. Nightly conferences were held. It was impossible to get an accurate line on the situation. Crowds gathered about Miners' Union Hall, where the meetings were held, and every one sought something tangible on which to base his market operations. The officers of the union were in and out of the market, taking advantage of their official positions to anticipate every favorable or unfavorable development.

It was a critically sensitive market situation. The drift, however, was unmistakably downward. Values began to melt like snow in a Spring thaw.

Through it all the Sullivan Trust Company stood valiantly behind its securities in all markets where they were traded in—to the limit. I was bull-headed. I had never before been through a mining-camp boom of such proportions, and I failed to recognize that a reaction must ensue, whether it was forced by Wingfield and Nixon or not. Tens of thousands of shares of Sullivan stocks were thrown at our brokers on the San Francisco Stock Exchange and New York Curb from day to day, and we took them all in, refusing to allow the market to yield to the pressure.

FROM CREDIT TO CRASH

TO CONVEY an idea as to the standing of the L. M. Sullivan Trust Company during this crucial period, I cite an instance. Logan & Bryan, members of the New York Stock Exchange, Chicago Stock Exchange, Chicago Board of Trade, New Orleans Cotton Exchange and all other important exchanges, who conduct a leased-wire system from coast to coast at a cost of $300,000 per annum, and who have over 100 correspondents in nearly as many cities, all of high standing as stock brokers, made a tentative offer to the Sullivan Trust Company early in December to connect their wire system with our office in Goldfield and to give us the exclusive wire connection for Nevada at an annual rental of $100,000. This offer would not have been made if the credit of the Sullivan Trust Company had not been maintained at high notch, or if I, personally, had not convinced men of substance that I was strictly on the level, "Past" or no "Past."

Ben Bryan, the active member of this firm, was in Goldfield at the time. He asked as to our finances. There was present Cashier J. L. Lindsey of the State Bank & Trust Company.

"How much would your bank loan the Sullivan Trust Company on its unindorsed paper and at a moment's notice?" I asked Mr. Lindsey.

"A quarter of a million or more," answered Mr. Lindsey.

This apparently satisfied Mr. Bryan.

Our rating in Bradstreet's and Dun's was "AA1." A private statement issued by Bradstreet's was to the effect that while our rating was only $1,000,000 and we claimed a capital and surplus of only $1,000,000 at the time the rating was given, it was believed in Goldfield that we were worth much more, and that we had actually understated our resources because we considered it bad policy to divulge the great profits in the promotion business.

By December 15 the condition of the Sullivan Trust Company had become about as follows:

Our $3,000,000 surplus had been reduced to $2,000,000, and all of this $2,000,000, plus the loss, was represented by our own bought-back stocks. We had no money, except about $50,000, remaining of the $300,000 borrowed from the State Bank & Trust Company. We were committed in excess of this $50,000 to brokers for stocks in transit, but by the "crossing" process we were able to maintain a chain that kept intact our reduced cash balance. We figured that a fresh loan of $300,000, additional to the $300,000 already obtained from the State Bank & Trust Company, would enable us to take up all of our paper and to discontinue the "cross" trades. We promptly arranged for the loan, which Cashier Lindsey of the State Bank & Trust Company informed us would be immediately credited to our account

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whenever we required the money. Interest charges were at the rate of 1 per cent. a month in the camp at that time, and for that reason I did not ask that we be at once credited with the amount. I sent over to the State Bank & Trust Company another big batch of stocks, to be held as collateral against the promised loan, and got a receipt for it stating that it was accepted as collateral on our "open loan" account.

The market in Sullivan stocks had now steadied itself and it appeared that it would be impossible for any further selling of consequence to take place. We had bought back in the open market fully 50 per cent. of all the stocks promoted by the trust company. Distribution of the stocks of our early promotions had originally taken place in such a broad way that it now appeared as if selling must necessarily become scattered. We felt somewhat crippled, but in no danger, and were "still in the ring."

DOWN WITH THE SULLIVAN TRUST COMPANY!

BY THIS time I was "all in" physically. I had a cyst, of fifteen years' growth, on the back of my head. It had become infected. I was threatened with blood-poisoning. I suffered much pain. I had been on the desert for nearly three years, without leaving it for a day. My associates insisted that I go to Los Angeles immediately for treatment and a rest. Believing that the trust company was secure, I made preparations to go. Before leaving I busied myself with the preparation of a dozen full-page reading-matter advertisements on Sullivan properties, which the Salt Lake *Tribune* and Salt Lake *Herald* had contracted to publish in their New Year's Day editions. These are an annual feature of those newspapers. I decided to "make" Salt Lake on my return trip from Los Angeles and be there on New Year's Day with our mailing-list, to superintend the mailing of the papers to all stockholders in Sullivan properties. On account of the great value which we attached to the mailing-list, I would not trust anybody but myself with the job. I spent Christmas in Los Angeles and arrived in Salt Lake on New Year's Day, ready for work.

I was busy in the Salt Lake *Herald* office next day when affable Peter Grant, a partner of Mr. Sullivan, with whom Mr. Sullivan had at the outset divided his interest in the Sullivan Trust Company, walked in. I asked Mr. Grant, who had remained at the helm with Mr. Sullivan while I was away from Goldfield, about business. He assured me that the loan from the State Bank & Trust Company would not only be forthcoming, as needed, but that Cashier Lindsey had informed him that we could have $500,000 instead of $300,000 additional, if we actually had to have it, and that the bank would back us to the extent of a million in all, if necessary.

On calling next morning at the office of James A. Pollock & Company, our Salt Lake correspondents, I was astounded to learn that rumors had been telegraphed to them from San Francisco that our paper was being held up in Goldfield.

"That's nonsense!" said Mr. Grant. "Why, Lindsey has given me his word, and there can't be a question about it."

"Maybe he has 'laid down' on us," I said, "and that would be ——!"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Grant. "I'll telegraph him that in addition to honoring our Goldfield paper with the money we have borrowed from him, he must wire $150,000 to our credit in San Francisco, and you and I can jump on the train to-day and go to San Francisco and support the market right on the ground. If those rumors have spread around San Francisco a lot of short-selling will take place and the market will need support." I agreed.

So confident were Mr. Grant, James A. Pollock & Company, and I that everything was right with us that we gave and they accepted a big supporting order to be used on the San Francisco Stock Exchange during the succeeding day while Mr. Grant and I should be on the train to the Coast city.

We arrived in San Francisco late at night. A number of brokers met us and conveyed the news that the State Bank & Trust Company had "laid down" on us. In the meantime despatches to us from the cashier of the Sullivan Trust Company had piled up at the hotel. He explained the situation, which was this:

All of the trains carrying drafts in the mail to Goldfield had been stalled by snowstorms two days before New Year's. The next day was Sunday. Monday was New Year's Day, a legal holiday. Thus five days' mail had accumulated, and on Tuesday the delayed drafts were presented, all in a bunch.

L. M. Sullivan, president of the trust company, who was supposed to be on deck

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at Goldfield, was in Tonopah, where he was reported to be in imminent danger of arrest on the charge that during a New Year's brawl he had nearly brained a chauffeur with the butt-end of a revolver.

The bank people became alarmed.

In requisitioning the $300,000 we had stated that we would call for it piecemeal, as had been our custom in the past. The five days' mail had piled up drafts totaling nearly the entire amount. I was absent from Goldfield. Mr. Grant was away, and so was Mr. Sullivan. Employees were running the business. Cashier Lindsey concluded that we were "overboard." On top of it all, Donald Mackenzie, the heaviest depositor of the State Bank & Trust Company, had that very morning drawn out a large sum, said to aggregate $400,000, and had it transferred to San Francisco. Our wires from Goldfield stated he had been frightened by rumors that the Sullivan Trust Company was in trouble and that the State Bank & Trust Company would be involved.

That settled it. The enterprise that I had built up from such a meager beginning into a $3,000,000 trust company crumbled in a heap and left us stranded on the financial shoals of an over-boomed mining camp.

SOME HINDSIGHT THAT CAME TOO LATE

I ATTRIBUTE the destruction of the Sullivan Trust Company to six factors, namely, (1) politics; (2) blackmail; (3) lack of wide distribution of our later promotions, we having sold most of these stocks in large blocks during the exciting boom days through brokers to speculators instead of disposing of them in small lots direct to investors; (4) my lack of knowledge of markets and inexperience in market manipulation; (5) my own stubborn pride and optimism, and (6) the failure of the State Bank & Trust Company to keep its pledge of assistance.

It is conceded in Nevada by all honest men that, without exception, all of the properties promoted by the L. M. Sullivan Trust Company had merit, and that money was lavishly provided for mine development as long as the trust company was in existence. The properties were selected with great care. They were very much higher in quality than the average. Those at Manhattan are yielding treasure to this very day, and may make good yet in a handsome way from a mining standpoint. Those at Fairview bid fair to duplicate the performance. Had I kept out of politics, been a good market general, and taken cognizance of the fact that the law of supply and demand is as inexorable in mining-stock markets as in every other line of human endeavor, I could have saved myself and associates from financial ruin.

It would have been the better part of valor to have emulated Bob Acres—back up and "live to fight another day." Instead, I attempted the impossible in my endeavor to stem the tide of liquidation, and exhausted our resources to the last dollar in buying back the Sullivan stocks at advanced figures over the promotion prices. I didn't know then, as I know now, that the accepted practise of the successful market operator is to go with the crowd—to help along an advance when the public is buying, and, with equal facility, to further a decline when everybody wants to sell. It was my first experience, and, like so many beginners, I was overconfident, lacking in judgment, and fatally ignorant of the finer points of the game.

The complete collapse of the financial structure I had labored so hard to construct came as an overwhelming blow to the camp and marked the beginning of the end of the great Goldfield mining-stock craze.

Our enemies had overshot the mark. Public confidence was irreparably shattered by the smash of the trust company, and it would have been better for Goldfield and Nevada had Wingfield and Nixon possessed sufficient foresight to go to our rescue instead of facilitating our destruction. Money that had poured into the camp without cessation month after month for mine development started to flow the other way.

Less than a year later, when Wall Street's financial cataclysm put a quietus on market activities of every sort, the great fortunes of Wingfield and Nixon themselves hung in the balance, and had it not been for a quick transaction by which the United States Mint at San Francisco forwarded by express to Reno and Goldfield $500,000 in gold, the failure of Wingfield and Nixon and their chain of banks might have happened as a fitting climax to the scheme of aggrandizement which they had fostered.

It was rumored at the time that this money had either been obtained from the Government as a deposit for the Nixon National Bank in Reno or was obtained at great sacrifice from Wall Street bankers, and

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that only by virtue of Mr. Nixon's position as Chairman of the Committee on National Banks of the United States Senate was he able to get the Sub-Treasury in New York to instruct the Mint at San Francisco to supply the gold at this crucial period when fiat money was current in the East. Whether it was a Government deposit or not, Senator Nixon got it—and he needed it.

Even to this day Wingfield and Nixon are engaged in an effort to shift the responsibility to me for the destruction of the great mining camp of Goldfield, which to-day marks the graveyard of a million blighted hopes.

On the eve of the Wall Street panic of 1907, every bank in Goldfield and Tonopah that had existed through the mining boom, with the exception of those of Wingfield and Nixon, went to the wall, and every Goldfield broker, with but one or two exceptions, went broke. The business interests of the camp suffered the same experience. Wingfield and Nixon succeeded in annexing the remnants of the Goldfield banking business, along with the control of nearly all of the Goldfield properties for which they had been seemingly gunning. Wingfield and Nixon are, in fact, to-day in control of the political as well as the banking and precious-metal mining industry of the State. They have triumphed, but Goldfield, except for the big mine and one or two others of little consequence which they do not own, has been throttled and is dying the death. Had Wingfield and Nixon played a broad gauged game, the camp would undoubtedly still be on the map and, instead of having only two or three mines, might now boast of thirty.

AS QUICKLY as possible I convened a meeting of the creditors of the Sullivan Trust Company, all of whom happened to be either Western brokers or banks. The market had gone to smash and our liabilities were $1,200,000. The assets, calculated at the low market price of the securities that was reached after the embarrassment was publicly announced, were still in excess of the liabilities. The creditors agreed in jig time that if we would turn over all of the securities they would accept 80 per cent. of the net proceeds as full payment of our obligation and return the other 20 per cent. to the trust company.

Thomas B. Rickey, president of the State Bank & Trust Company, was appointed manager of the pool, and was also elected president of the Sullivan Trust Company, which exists in moribund state to this day. Mr. Rickey had even a higher opinion of the value of the securities than we had, and he refused to sell any of them at the prices which then prevailed. He held on. During the bankers' panic of 1907 the State Bank & Trust Company failed for about $3,000,000. The Sullivan mines were compelled to shut down. Mr. Rickey still held on. Manhattan, the mining camp, struck the toboggan. The boom in Goldfield securities collapsed at the same moment. The Sullivan stocks shriveled, like the rest of the list, to almost nothing.

As far as I can learn, neither the bank or broker-creditors nor any of the members of the Sullivan Trust Company have ever received a dollar as a result of the settlement. Had the securities been disposed of immediately after the embarrassment, the trust company would have paid dollar for dollar. Those of the public who did not sell their holdings in the Sullivan companies when we were supporting the market to the extent of more than $3,000,000, lost most of their investment. Those who did sell—most of them—made money. The market value of these securities, at the height of he boom, was in excess of $5,000,000. The price paid for them by the public, as already stated, was in the neighborhood of $2,000,000.

After settling with the creditors of the Sullivan Trust Company on the basis just outlined, I departed from Goldfield as broke as when I arrived there three years before. The only money I or my partners had drawn from the business during the life of the trust company was about $5,000, just sufficient to pay living expenses. My expenses to New York, where I went to have my head operated on—are you surprised?—were supplied by the proceeds of the sale of my seat on one of the Goldfield stock exchanges, from which I netted $400. I landed back in the big city with $200 in my pocket, the exact sum with which I had left town three years before.

My reward for three years of untiring work on the desert was a big fund of Experience. Believe me, I thought it would hold me for a while! But it didn't.

(Next month the Rawhide Boom and the move on Wall Street.)

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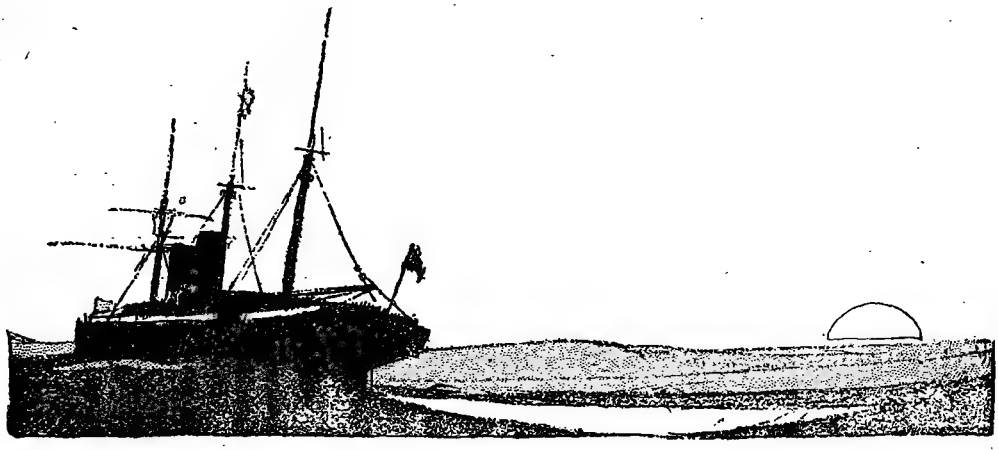

A Three-Cornered Game

by Philip R. Kellar

JEFFREYS BOLLING walked nonchalantly into the Paris branch of old Solomon Lapinsky's Amsterdam jewelry store and asked for the eight large diamonds. He was a tall, lean, cadaverous-looking man, whose thin face was furrowed by the marks of many battles of wit and shrewdness. When the bustling clerk bowed obsequiously, Bolling smiled, disclosing a set of very large and very white teeth, in one of which glittered a gold filling.

"Yes, m'sier," said the clerk, "the eight diamonds. Which eight diamonds?"

"Didn't know you had but one set," Bolling grumbled. "I mean the ones that Lapinsky sent here from Amsterdam to be held until to-day for Delmar Williamson of New York."

"Yes, yes, m'sier, quite right, quite right. I have them carefully laid away." He turned to the safe, rattling on as he brought out the gems, "M'sier Williamson, he is a ve'y big, a ve'y rich diamond merchant, is he not? Yes, he makes many purchases from Herr Lapinsky."

Bolling did not reply, being busily engaged in making a careful examination of the gems. Satisfied that they were what he had come from New York for, he drew a fat wallet from his pocket.

"Let's see, the price was $12,500, wasn't it?"

"That is quite right, m'sier, quite right."

Bolling counted out the money. "Now I suppose you understand there is to be no record made here of this sale?"

"Yes, m'sier, Herr Lapinsky has attended to all that at Amsterdam. My instructions were to deliver them to you and accept the money."

The transaction was nearly completed when an attractive young woman entered, threw a quick, comprehensive and searching glance about the store and addressed the clerk:

"I came to get the eight diamonds."

"*Mon Dieu!*" the clerk exclaimed. "The eight diamonds? Which eight diamonds?"

"Why, the set that Lapinsky was holding here for Delmar Williamson of New York. Haven't you got them?"

The clerk was so surprised he forgot to be excited. He stared from the woman to Bolling. The latter, too, was surprised, but kept himself well in hand and spoke to her with a smile that scarcely veiled a sneer.

"Evidently that's too big an order to the clerk. He's knocked silly."

"But, but," the clerk recovered the use of his tongue, "I have just delivered the same gems to this gentleman."

"Oh," the woman turned frankly on Bolling. "I suppose it's all right. Only Mr. Williamson didn't tell me."

"He didn't tell me, either," Bolling growled. "Don't suppose he was setting

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a watch on both of us, do you? He's so—so suspicious."

She laughed lightly. "Oh, no, I imagine he just wanted to be sure there would be no slip, Mr. ——"

"My name's Bolling," he said as she paused, "Jeffreys Bolling."

"I'm Miss Katherine Kettering." She held out her hand with a gracious, friendly gesture. "I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Bolling. I thought it was you, but I didn't want to make a break."

"Thought it was me?" He looked suspicious for an instant.

"Yes—through Mr. Williamson. You've known each other a long time, haven't you?" It was more an assertion than a question and her frank smile disarmed him. "The *Brittany* sails for New York from Havre tomorrow. Are you going right back or—" she leaned nearer and whispered, "do you think you haven't covered your tracks quite enough?"

Mr. Jeffreys Bolling was silent more from force of habit than because he was suspicious of her. He had long made it a practise never to admit anything unless compelled to do so, not even a seemingly inconsequential detail.

"I came to Paris in a roundabout way," she went on rapidly; "went direct to London, then to Berlin, down to Rome and up here. I'm a rich American tourist, touring aimlessly," she laughed knowingly, "and, like them, am not averse to picking up a diamond or two on the chance of slipping them home." There was a suspicion of a wink in the way she looked at him. "I'm stopping at the Hotel Valerie."

Bolling put the box in his inside breast pocket, opened and held the door for her, without replying. Outside he hailed a cab.

"I never say such things, even in fun."

"Oh, have I made a mistake already?" She looked chagrined; her apparent helplessness appealed to his sense of male superiority and he felt like protecting her.

"It's nothing—but don't do it again, especially in front of other people."

HE ACCOMPANIED her to the hotel and remained, explaining that he had not had time to go to a hotel. Next morning, though nothing had been said, they went to the railway station together and boarded the train for Havre. That evening they were aboard the *Brittany*, bound for New York.

"Strange I've never met you before, Mr. Bolling," said Katherine as they leaned over the rail watching the play of the setting sun's rays on the water.

"Oh, it's a large world," he replied noncommittally.

"I know, but you've been traveling back and forth between Europe and America for some time for Mr. Williamson, haven't you?"

"I've done quite a good deal of gadding."

"Oh, don't be such a clam!" she cried with well-feigned petulancy.

"How long have you been—traveling?" He smiled.

"For Williamson? Not long. I'm new."

"He doesn't like to have people talk about him very much," Bolling leaned closer and whispered. "That's just a tip."

"Thank you." She looked very grateful. "Where have you got the sparklers?"

"What sparklers?" He laughed in good humor with himself. "Oh, perhaps I sent them by express. It isn't always wise to carry so much valuable property with you."

Katherine knew he was not telling the truth, but she could think of no good answer. His bantering smile was made more provoking by the glittering gold filling in his front tooth. After a long silence she said,

"I suppose after a while I'll not talk so much, but—I do so want to make a success!"

"A good way to do that is not to talk—at least not to talk too much. That has spoiled many a well-laid plan."

She laughed. "You're never guilty in that way, are you? I don't suppose even Williamson knows how you work it."

Bolling did not reply. A man walking past them had attracted his attention, and he watched until the walker disappeared around the bow-end of the cabin.

"I know that man," he said. "Don't move! You can see him without moving." His warning stopped her. "His name is Chester Bracken. He's a special agent from the New York customs office."

"Oh!" Katherine started.

"Steady!" Bolling warned. "Does he know you?"

"Not that I am aware of. I'm quite confident he doesn't. I—I must cultivate him."

"Why?" He was again suspicious.

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"Why,"—her laugh was nervous—"why so I can understand him and know how better to—to——"

"Pull the wool over his eyes?" Katherine nodded and Bolling went on. "That may work, but—it's dangerous. I've met Bracken on a number of occasions, though I've never let him know in so many words that I know his identity, his business. Better let him seek your acquaintance."

"Of course," Katherine replied, "I'll not run after him."

"If you should meet him, you might try to find out who he's watching on this trip." Bolling spoke as if he were only slightly interested.

Their talk drifted into other channels. Both had traveled extensively, had seen many things as they traveled and had remembered the interesting sights found in out-of-the-way places. Bolling was fluent enough when speaking of anything but his personal affairs, and though Katherine appropriated the lion's share of the time she possessed the happy faculty of holding the interest of her auditor and at the same time spurring him to greater efforts.

An hour passed and Bolling's veneer of cynicism and suspicion was almost entirely obliterated by Katherine's wit and frankness. He was surprised that the time had passed so rapidly—and pleased.

"It isn't often one meets a really congenial traveling companion," he said, "and I'm always thankful when I am as fortunate as I am this trip."

The approach of Bracken prevented the necessity of a reply. The secret-agent nodded to Bolling, paused for a moment and then started on. Bolling nodded in reply and called out:

"How are you, Mr. Bracken? Won't you shake hands?"

Bracken accepted the outstretched hand.

"Still traveling for your health?" he smiled.

"Yes," replied Bolling, "the doctor says I must, and sea air seems to agree with me."

He introduced Bracken to Miss Kettering and excused himself in a few moments to dress for dinner. The "special" continued to smoke his pipe and gaze across the water for five minutes.

"Been abroad long?" he finally asked abruptly.

"No, just a little while this trip."

"Traveling for your health, too?"

"Partly," she laughed.

"Known Bolling long?"

"Just met him. He seems quite pleasant once you can overlook his cynicism."

"Meet him on the boat?" Bracken asked between puffs.

"No, in Paris yesterday, by accident."

Bracken darted a quick, inquiring, comprehensive glance at her, but remained silent and she asked,

"You've known him for some time?"

"Oh, just casually. We bump into each other quite frequently. He's a buyer for a diamond merchant in New York, Delmar Williamson. You've heard of him, haven't you?" Katherine nodded. "Live in New York, do you?"

"When I'm at home," she smiled, "but that isn't much of the time. I'm usually on the go."

Bracken did not reply and there was another long silence. When the conversation was resumed it took a less personal turn and before long the special agent realized with a start that this attractive young woman, who seemed quite friendly with the man he was watching, was trying to pump him. He looked at her with renewed interest, and surprised a quizzical smile in her eyes.

"Mr. Bracken," she said suddenly, "I've found you out! You are"—she leaned close and whispered—"you are a friend of the rich." He stared, not understanding, and with a laugh she went on: "I mean, you are trying to help them buy their diamonds cheaper!"

"What are you talking about?" His surprise was not put on.

"Why, if diamonds go into the United States free of duty the dealers can sell them cheaper and the purchasers can buy them cheaper. Wouldn't that be helping the rich?"

"Well, it might be helping one man into the Federal prison," he retorted.

"I know," she murmured softly. "I don't like to think of people being put in prison. I—I—you must be careful."

Again he stared at her, his pipe suspended near his mouth. "I—I don't understand, Miss Kettering."

"Oh, of course you do!" she replied a little impatiently. "You—you are trying to —to slip some diamonds into New York. Mr. Bolling told me he was quite sure you were a—a smuggler."

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"Did he tell you that?" Bracken had lost his air of listlessness and was sitting up straight.

"Yes," she spoke rapidly, "and more besides. He says he's going to keep a close watch of you."

"Well, well!"

Bracken smoked furiously and silently for another minute, then excused himself and hurried to his cabin. When he disappeared Miss Kettering smiled and thought,

"There, I'll have them watching each other so much they'll forget all about poor little insignificant me!"

THE three were placed at the same table, Katherine and Bolling next to each other, with Bracken directly opposite. During dinner the special agent watched the girl and man closely, though apparently not looking at them. On several occasions he was angry because they seemed to be having such an interesting time. He was more angry when he discovered that he was jealous of Bolling and sorry for Katherine. The girl, whom he had met only an hour before and with whom he had exchanged scarcely a dozen sentences, had exerted a strange influence over him, had appealed immediately to him in a way no other woman had for years.

Bracken was sorry for her because he was convinced she was Bolling's accomplice—or his dupe. One would be almost as bad as the other.

For the next three days Bolling was not put to the necessity of feigning illness. He did not appear because he could not. During that time Miss Kettering and the special agent passed many pleasant hours together, and Bracken's pity and interest in her increased rapidly.

They did not refer often to Bolling, and seldom did Katherine again mention her belief that Bracken was a smuggler. At times she would express her opinion on the import duty on jewels, in a general sort of way, giving him to understand that while she did not approve of deliberate law-breaking as a rule, she wouldn't consider it an unpardonable offense if he should be a diamond smuggler. Bracken explained this seeming laxity of principle on the ground that she was herself what she suspected him of being. Several times he was on the point of confessing his identity, but was restrained each time when he remembered that it would immediately put a stop to their friendship. And he didn't want it stopped, even if she were a smuggler.

They drifted into an intimacy in that rapid way possible on board ship, and when Bolling made his reappearance on the fourth day Bracken resented it, and resented it still more when he learned that he would not be permitted to monopolize Miss Kettering. He tried to console himself with the thought that it would force him to be more attentive to his duties.

Bracken knew that Bolling required his entire attention. For several years the man had been under suspicion and Bracken had vainly tried on at least five different occasions to trick him when he knew that Bolling had just purchased diamonds abroad and was smuggling them into the United States.

Bracken knew that Bolling had purchased eight unset diamonds in Paris; that they were the stones Williamson himself had selected in Lapinsky's shop in Amsterdam; and that Katherine had been with Bolling in Paris when the purchase was completed. He was morally certain that Bolling had the diamonds with him.

Bracken felt that if he could not catch Bolling this time he might as well give up trying. And as he puzzled over the case he kept wondering what part Katherine was to play in it. He had searched Bolling's personal belongings half a dozen times before and had never found anything that gave him the slightest clew to the hiding-place of the diamonds the man smuggled across. He had no reason to suppose he would be more successful this time, but he knew that he must be.

The entrance of Katherine might make his task either easier or more difficult. He hadn't made up his mind on this point. Usually when he thought of her in connection with Bolling it was only to feel sorry she was mixed up with him. And always he ended these silent reflections with an angry exclamation at himself for permitting his personal feelings to enter so much into a business affair, and with the resolution to watch Katherine from a distance so he would not come under the spell of her attractive personality.

It was a resolve easier made than carried out. When he saw that Bolling was under the same spell and that Katherine apparently encouraged him, the special agent could not stand aside and give the man he

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knew was a smuggler a clear field. The *Brittany* was a slow boat. On the fourth day he contented himself with watching Bolling and Katherine, who were together most of the day. On the next day he searched Bolling's cabin.

BOLLING and Katherine walked around to the lee side to escape the stiff wind, and stood near the rail. The man had come out of his shell considerably since his first meeting with the girl, but never had he given any intimation either that he was a smuggler or of the manner in which diamonds could be slipped past the customs officers.

"Do you think a man or a woman makes the best——?"

Bolling interrupted her.

"Don't finish the sentence." He laughed noiselessly. "One never can tell who is listening. I don't know, though. I think it depends upon the person."

"But a man, it seems to me, has so many more hiding-places about his clothes," she persisted.

"Let's talk about something more interesting—you—us. I hope this will be your last trip."

"Why?" She stared innocently at him.

"Why, because,"—his laugh was embarrassed—"because I hope it will be *my* last. I want to settle down in my own home with, with my own—my own family."

"Where does your wife live?"

"Oh, I'm not married," he replied in quick confusion. "I was just wishing I——"

A sudden gust of wind swept his cap off. In grabbing for it he gave a lurch forward and Katherine was startled at the look of anxiety and fear that spread over his face as his hand flew to his mouth. It was just in time to catch his upper false teeth which had fallen out. His sigh of relief was so genuine that Katherine laughed, relieving the tensity of the situation.

"Lucky you caught them," she said.

"Yes, it was."

"But it wouldn't have put you out of commission, would it?" She smiled artlessly. "You know, Mr. Bolling, I'm been wanting to ask you a question for some time, but—well, I didn't know but what you might feel a little bit offended if I mentioned your false teeth."

"I might have," he had recovered his composure, "but there's no need to pretend, now, that they're my own."

"You have another set, haven't you? One that has no gold filling?" She laughed again. "That puzzled me at first, when I noticed one day you appeared without the gold, at the table. Then I thought of the false teeth."

"Yes," he tried to pass it off lightly, "I was vain enough when I had to get them at first to have the gold put in because I had a similar filling in my own teeth. Then I had an extra set—I travel about so much that I thought it might be decidedly inconvenient to have an accident a thousand miles away from a dentist. But I forgot all about the filling the second time."

"So, like all mysteries," she spoke lightly, "it isn't any mystery at all when you know about it."

He laughed, changed the subject and presently excused himself to visit the engineer.

"He's an old friend of mine," Bolling explained, "and I've got a sort of a friend among the stokers—poor chap I helped keep from starving last Winter in New York."

When he had left, Katherine puzzled for a long time over his friend the stoker, wondering whether this were only a ruse to have a good hiding-place for the diamonds. She thought that it would be scarcely possible for a detective to suspect a stoker on an ocean liner of having twelve or fifteen thousand dollars' worth of diamonds in his possession. In a few minutes, however, she went below and made straight for Bolling's cabin, murmuring to herself, "Well, if he has them hid in his cabin I think I can find them."

SATISFIED that no one was watching her, she tried to push open the door. It was locked. She heard some one stirring inside, but it couldn't be Bolling. The person within waited a moment, then strode across the floor, unlocked the door and opened it. Bracken, for it was he, stared at Katherine and she stared back. She recovered first, stepped quickly inside and closed the door.

"Well!" She looked indignant.

"Well," he grinned.

With one glance she took in the details of Bolling's disarranged personal belongings, and her scorn was not feigned when she replied,

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"I—I didn't think it so bad when I found out you were a smuggler, but—but to learn you are a—a thief!"

"No, I'm not!" he was stung by her words and manner. "I'm not a thief!"

"It looks very much like it."

"Why did you come here?" he retorted, thinking that his suspicions were more than verified and sorry they were.

"To return a book I borrowed from Mr. Bolling." She was quite calm. "He didn't feel like coming down, it was too windy to keep it on deck, and I volunteered to help him to that extent. Can you explain your actions as well?"

"I—not quite." Bracken searched for words, not wishing to tell her he thought she was a smuggler, nor desiring to let her know his own identity. "I—I wanted to see if Bolling had some information that might—might be of service to me—might help me. I——"

"Did you find it?"

"No,"—he was glad to be able to stop lying by implication—"not a trace of it." She did not reply and he added, "Let's go on deck. I've something I want to tell you."

Katherine, forgetting her excuse about the book, turned and preceded him into the hall. Bracken noted the slip with a knowing smile that was hidden from her as he turned to lock the door with his skeleton key. They sought a quiet nook and Bracken said abruptly,

"I wish you'd—that this would be your last trip." She looked quickly at him and then away, but did not reply. "I mean," he continued, "I wish you'd stop it."

"Stop what?"

"Stop this—this business."

"It's quite interesting," she answered lightly, "and exciting."

"I know," he was greatly in earnest, "I know, but I do wish this might be your last trip."

"Although it is interesting and exciting?"

"For that very reason," he spoke rapidly, "and for another. I—I hope this will be my last trip, too. I want to stop traveling and live in my own home."

"I haven't any home," she replied. "Where is yours?"

"I haven't any, either, but since I've met you I've realized that I want one."

Her merry laugh stopped him. "Why, Mr. Bracken, do you know that is almost exactly the same thing another man told me to-day? I wonder if he would have said it if he had thought, like you, that I am a—a—well you know what you think."

"You mean Bolling?" He spoke resentfully. "He—he can't appreciate a woman like you."

"What are you taking over? Diamonds?"

She asked the question so suddenly that Bracken was taken aback and surprised out of his resentment by the sudden realization that she really mistook him for a smuggler like herself. This also made him realize why she did not appreciate what it meant when Chester Bracken, one of the most trusted of Uncle Sam's special agents, should be on the point of proposing in good faith to a woman diamond smuggler.

"Would you think any—any less of me if I should say yes?" he answered craftily. When she paused he added quickly, "Because if you would, why, I'll have to say I'm not!"

"No," she laughed, "I don't believe it would make any difference what you say, but—I hope you're not doing those things."

"You've changed your views on that subject in the last few days." The change in her tone and manner made his heart beat faster.

"Not in the abstract," she replied. "I still think it isn't such an awful thing for people to smuggle diamonds, but—well, sometimes it makes a difference when the personal element enters into a question."

"Yes, I've learned that, too—since I met you."

"My!" her laugh ended the spell, "but we're making regular confessions. Let's stop before we say something we'll be sorry for afterward."

SO THE fifth day ended with none of the three satisfied, with each still uncertain about the others. Though there were two thousand others on board the *Brittany*, there were only three for them. Bracken, tortured by a feeling that his love for Katherine was rapidly overshadowing his sense of duty, spent half the night arguing with himself. Bolling, still secure in the feeling that no one could find the hiding-place of the diamonds, spent half the night wondering whether Katherine's half sympathetic manner had meant anything, and whether, when his work was done,

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he could hope to win her. Katherine, defeated in her efforts to discover Bolling's hiding-place for the diamonds, lay awake a long time wondering how much of Bracken's attempted love-making had been sincere; and also trying to think of some plan that would enable her to continue the search for the diamonds in the hold.

The next two days were uneventful. Katherine persuaded Bolling to take her to the hold to watch the stokers and introduce her to his friend. His readiness to do so convinced her that the diamonds were not hidden in that part of the ship. She avoided long tête-à-têtes with either of the two men and prevented them from growing sentimental.

The morning of the seventh day they came in sight of land, shortly before luncheon. In the excitement of such an event, which catches even seasoned voyagers, Bolling was not ready when the meal was announced. Katherine, hurrying from her own stateroom, almost bumped into him as he emerged from his. He laughed when she saw him fixing his teeth and slipping the other set in a box which he dropped into his coat pocket.

All through luncheon Katherine was unable to get her thoughts away from the man's teeth. The absence of the gold filling seemed so noticeable. Toward the end of the meal she had determined to get possession of the set in Bolling's pocket before he could have time to change them. Afterward, as they were in the crowd at the rail watching the rapidly approaching shoreline, she was able to carry out her determination. Bolling did not miss the little box.

When inside the three-mile line Bracken, determined to take a final desperate chance, disclosed his identity to the Captain, made a charge of theft against Bolling and the latter was arrested and thoroughly searched. He seemed worried, though not at their searching, at which he smiled. In the hubbub of approaching home the incident caused little excitement. Katherine did not hear of it until Bolling was released and he told her, half indignant, half amused.

"Bracken is a bungler," the man commented, "or he'd never have undertaken such risks."

"I suppose he's mad because you've fooled him so many times before."

Bolling looked intently at her. "You seem to know a great deal about me and Bracken."

Katherine laughed it off with the remark that she had been on the same ship with them for a week and had talked a great deal with them.

"You look put out," she concluded. "I wouldn't let it worry me. He didn't find the diamonds, did he?"

"He didn't find anything about me that shouldn't be there," Bolling replied evasively, as his hand unconsciously sought the pocket where the box had been, a puzzled frown coming across his forehead.

KATHERINE did not see Bracken again until the ship had docked. In the hurry and confusion of debarkation Bracken stood to one side silently, attentively watching the passengers as they passed the inspectors' examinations. Bolling was one of the last. He came into view, walking slowly and casting an occasional glance backward as though he were loath to leave the ship. Katherine, who had been waiting, followed a little in the rear. Bracken eyed them suspiciously.

Bolling paid scant attention to the inspector, as the latter ran his fingers through the man's one suit-case with the dexterity that had come from long practise. By the time Katherine reached them the inspector had completed his work and was marking the suit-case. Bolling looked worried, even a little pale, and his appearance caused Bracken to fix his gaze upon him. Just as Bolling was about to pick up his suit-case Katherine darted forward with a little cry,

"Oh, Mr. Bolling, here is something of yours!" She held out the box. "It must have caught some way in my boa."

Bolling's face brightened momentarily. Bracken caught the gleam of hope and joy in his eyes and sprang forward with a sudden determination. His hand touched the box in unison with Bolling's.

"Let me see it!" said the special agent.

Katherine stepped back in surprise.

"Certainly," replied Bolling after a momentary struggle with himself. "It's just a personal secret and not the thing a man likes the public to know about." He opened the box, disclosing the set of teeth with the gold filling.

Bracken was taken aback. Bolling, with a laugh, snapped the box shut and started to drop it into his pocket. At that instant Bracken seemed to see a great light.

"I guess I'll take it just the same," he

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said as his hand darted into Bolling's pocket. "I'd like to examine them."

After a brief struggle Bracken withdrew his hand, the box tightly clutched between his fingers. He called to a customs policeman and ordered the arrest of Bolling and Katherine.

"This is outrageous!" Katherine exclaimed indignantly. "You have no cause to submit me to such indignity. You—" her voice broke, "I thought you were——"

"Yes, I know," Bracken laughed mirthlessly, "you thought I was a smuggler. Perhaps you'll be more careful after you come out of prison."

"You'd better be careful now!" Bolling snarled, enraged for himself and on Katherine's account.

"Suppose we stop talking," the special agent replied curtly, "until I've made an examination of these precious extra teeth."

He drew to one side, the policeman, his assistant and the inspector following, opened the box, took out the teeth and examined them closely. Presently, with a cry of joy, he took out his knife and scraped around the edges of the plate underneath the molars. A section came out, and in the hollow disclosed lay four uncut diamonds. The other four were found concealed in the set of upper teeth in the same manner.

"Very clever," Bracken commented dryly. "No wonder you had us fooled so long, Bolling. How much does Williamson give you for a job of this sort?"

"Nothing doing," the smuggler retorted in sullen rage.

"You might as well squeal on him," said Bracken persuasively. "We'll get him anyway, and it may save you a few months behind the bars."

"Nothing doing," Bolling repeated.

Katherine was edging away, but stopped when Bracken spoke to her.

"I've nothing to do with it!" she cried. "You've no right to detain me!"

"You had the diamonds," Bracken spoke curtly, "and handed them to Bolling after you thought he had passed inspection. I think we'd better hold you as an accomplice."

"She didn't have anything to do with the job," Bolling spoke up earnestly. "Honest, Bracken, she didn't know anything about it. There's no use mixing her up in it."

"But we'll need her as a witness, anyway."

"Witness——!" Bolling was very angry. "You've got the goods on me, haven't you?"

After more talk Bracken consented to let Katherine go upon her promise to appear at the office of his Chief the next morning and be examined by him. Katherine gave the promise cheerfully, thanked Bracken, thanked Bolling more effusively and seemed quite affected by his trouble.

"I guess I took one trip too many," said the smuggler. "But then, if I hadn't, I wouldn't have met you. I'll see you again," he whispered to her, "after I get loose!"

NEXT morning Bracken was in the Chief's private office, recounting the story of Bolling's capture, when Katherine was ushered in. His jaw dropped when the Chief arose and shook her hand cordially.

"Why—why, Chief," he stammered, "that's the woman I was telling you about —Bolling's accomplice!"

Katherine smiled demurely, and the Chief laughed hilariously. Pressed by Bracken for an explanation, he said,

"Why, Bracken, Miss Kettering was going to get your job if you had failed to nab Bolling this time! She's one of the best specials in the service—been doing such good work out in San Francisco that I got the Treasury Department to lend her to me to catch Bolling."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Bracken. After a moment's pause he asked, "But why didn't you tell me?"

"I was afraid," Katherine explained, "that Bolling would suspect me, if you didn't. So long as I could keep you watching me, he'd see it and not be afraid of me."

"You knew the diamonds were in the teeth when you handed them to him?"

"Yes, but I was quite sure you would do just what you did, and I knew there wouldn't be any way for him to wiggle out of it if we should catch him that way."

AS THEY were leaving the office Bracken said softly,

"Well, anyway, what I said about that last trip and that home goes just as strong now as it did when I thought you were a smuggler. How about it?"

"Let's wait a little bit," she nestled closer to him, "till we know each other a little better before talking about that. I think I'd like to make two or three more trips—if —if you are along, too!"

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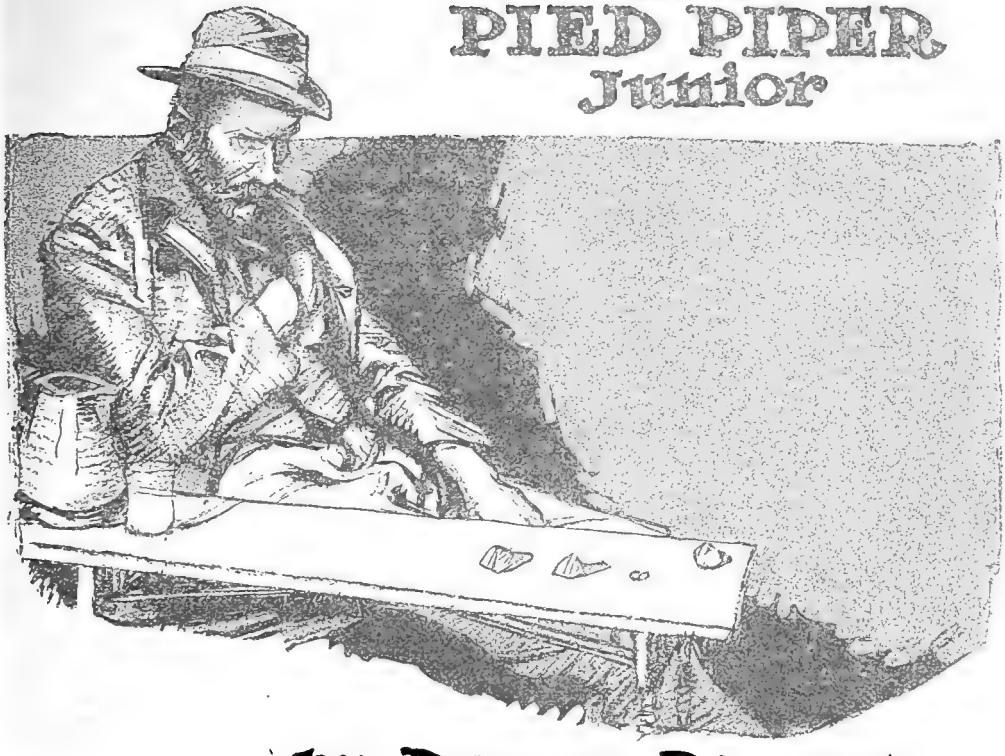

by Damon Runyon

WITH the fretful winds of Kansas City police disapproval at his back, and vast uncharted seas of Sunflower hostility before him, Tobias K. Cram cruised westward along the main channel of the Santa Fé, depressed and pessimistic.

A police magistrate had given him his sailing orders that morning. They were cleaning out the derelicts in the harbor on the Kaw, and Tobias had been blown under the bows of the legal craft at Fourth and Wyandotte streets, just as dawn was speckling the big buildings. So he was adrift.

Tobias K. Cram was one of the few survivors of an almost extinct species. He was a three-shell man. One of these days photographs of three-shell men will be exhibited in the archives of our nation—the Smithsonian Institute, perhaps—along with the buffalo, the great auk, skulls of the mound-builders, original copies of Presidential Thanksgiving proclamations, and other object-lessons and relics of an early civilization.

Three-shell men used to be as common as plumbers, or policemen, and nearly as prosperous. Specimens have been taken in every corner of our broad land; they were peculiar to no one section.

Their disappearance began many years ago, with the decadence of the noble Red Man, the cold deck and the six pistol, and while it is likely that some will survive as long as the English walnut tree continues to bear fruit, the real shell man is found to-day only on the unregenerate frontiers of our country. Occasionally he is encountered near Forty-second and Broadway, but never in New Rochelle, Concord, Mass., or Bisbee, Ariz.

Tobias K. Cram, as stated, was a three-shell man, and there had never been any better manipulator of the saltatory pea than this excessively bald, depressed-looking little man of forty-five years of age.

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Tobias had been with Soto's Mammoth Street Fair and Carnival Company during the Summer season, playing that unmapped but nevertheless definite section of the United States designated as "the Whisker Belt." Business had been very bad for Tobias. He had seined six counties with his verbal nets and his nimble fingers and his total return had been less than enough to pay Soto for the privilege of marching in the wake of the Mammoth Street Fair and Carnival and pitching his walnut-shells along with the tents.

"They used to say a sucker was born every minute," he confided to Mademoiselle Myrtilla, the Albino Snake Charmer, as he was packing his baggage in his left-hand hip pocket preparatory to departure. "Mebbe they was, in them days, but race suicide has set in among the fish family. I ain't made enough money to buy a canary bird singin' lessons, and it's been gittin' worse and worse every season, too! Everybody's a wise guy now and when you go to make a pitch the farmers laugh at you. All the suckers are married and have to git home early."

"There ain't much money in the show business anywhere now, Shelley," said Myrtilla seriously. She was a placid, good-natured creature, long since run to undefined waist-line; a woman of years, experience and motherly instinct whose ash-colored hair was dusted with gray. She always called Tobias "Shelley."

"I'm mighty glad," continued the snake charmer, "that I put my money in that little farm down to Comford, Kansas. It's some place where I can go in the off season and take Elmer and Sidney and Freddie and Nellie and the rest of my folks for a vacation. Some time I'll settle down there for good and all."

"Myrt," said Tobias, with as much tenderness as a small, bald-headed man could be expected to compress into mere verbal expression, "Myrt, I want to say that I hope, some day—well, *you* know what! I ain't forgot them times when we was with Hampacker's old circus. I trusts that one of these times—well, you know how it's always been with me, Myrt!"

Myrtilla laughed heartily. "Still like me, do you, Shelley?" she asked. "That's nice. You always was the nicest of what few beaus I had, but you'll have to throw away them three shells if you want to get anywhere with me. You've got a good head, Shelley; you ain't no fool, but you're on a dead card now. The shells are played out, and when you come right down to it, snake charmin' ain't no headliner at that. I always liked you, Shelley. You'n' me been around the Whisker Belt a long time, but—I got Elmer and Sidney and the rest of the family to look after and I can't start no home for aged shell men."

"Oh, hang that Elmer and the rest of them snakes!" snapped Tobias. Then he boarded the accommodation train.

AS HE TRUDGED along the railroad tracks with Kansas City behind him, the thoughts of Tobias K. Cram were with Mademoiselle Myrtilla. She was in Winter quarters now, he judged, with her snakes. Tobias had always cordially detested Myrtilla's snakes. He could never rid himself of the idea that they had usurped a place in her affections which might, under other circumstances, have belonged to him. A grand woman, Myrtilla, reflected Tobias K. Cram, and one worthy to adorn any man's home.

A west-bound freight-train rumbled out of the haze and Tobias awoke from his reverie long enough to affix himself, like a mournful bat, to a brakebeam. He fluttered therefrom in the railroad yards of a town well inland, among the cornfields of the Sunflower State.

In the sand-house of the railroad yards at Watterson that night Tobias endeavored to catch a few winks of sleep. A loquacious hobo with a literary turn of mind was sitting up, rolling cigarettes and reading a newspaper by the flickering light from the stove. He annoyed Tobias a great deal, because he insisted upon reading aloud, and as the paper was a Watterson weekly, which the garrulous tramp had picked up somewhere, Tobias declined to be much interested.

"Here's a hot one!" said the conversational hobo. "Listen to this gag!"

Then he proceeded to read:

"Watterson wants a Pied Piper! Some months ago several car-loads of grain were shipped to this town from Oriental ports for experimental purposes, arriving by way of San Francisco. In the shipment there apparently came a number of large rats which escaped as the grain was unloaded and took up residence in various parts of the town. At first no attention was paid to them, as rats had never before been seen in this section, but they have increased in

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numbers until the town is simply overrun with the large gray rodents so familiar to coast towns.

The situation has become serious, and was discussed last night by the town council. Traps have been tried without any degree of success; poison has been distributed until nearly all the dogs in town are dead and children's lives have been endangered. The rats are big, vicious fellows and cats are unable to cope with them. The council took no official action last night but would undoubtedly pay well for a means of ridding Watterson of the rodents. The rats have been playing havoc with the crops as well as the housewives' pantries."

"Well, whadda ye think of that?" demanded the hobo.

Tobias grunted.

"I ain't seen no rats around here," continued his unwelcome companion. "I ain't seen no *real* rats since I was in the Philippines with the Thirteenth Minnesota outfit. Them Gugus don't mind a snake at all. They're to them like house pets is to us in this country, and believe me, they give a rat *all* that's a-coming to him!"

"Oh, —— snakes!" said Tobias sleepily, his thought reverting to Myrtilla. "I never could stand 'em! I hate 'em!"

"You and me both!" agreed the hobo. "Any kind. Live snakes or them that ain't alive but which you can see just the same. But I ain't stuck on no rats either! One of 'em bit me once and——"

Tobias dreamed of large rats and larger snakes and also of Myrtilla, who seemed to be cooking a large steak smothered with onions for him.

II

PROMPTLY at ten the next morning Tobias K. Cram was propelled from the blind baggage of a flying passenger-train by the sudden rear onslaught of an unsympathetic brakeman. Tobias sat under the edge of a station platform and hurled weak curses after the vanishing express. Then he looked up at the sign to see where he was.

Comford! That was the post-office address of Mademoiselle Myrtilla! Tobias knit his brows as he ransacked the recesses of his memory for Myrtilla's every-day name. Then he went to the post-office and inquired for the home of Miss Hannah Sprigg.

He found her after a five-mile tramp over the country roads—found her clad in a gingham apron, her apothecaried albino hair loose about her shoulders and her generous lines undulating freely in a Mother Hubbard gown.

"Why, *Shelley!*" she cried, with a ring of gladness in her tone which Tobias hoped he was not imagining. "I'm tickled to death to see you! Where did you come from anyway?"

Tobias explained everything briefly, admitted the direct charge that he was hungry and in a few moments he was seated at the kitchen table, stuffing hot biscuit and ham and eggs into his mouth while he viewed with satisfaction and some envy the comfortable surroundings of the lady who charmed him as well as the snakes. Forty acres of Kansas land—as good as yellow wheat in the bin—an attractive setting for a little house which, to Tobias at least, left nothing to be desired.

As he sat eating and listening to Myrtilla explain each detail of the establishment, he became conscious of a dragging weight about his right leg which suddenly transferred itself to his lap, and, looking down, he stared into the scaly countenance and beady eyes of an immense snake. Tobias leaped to his feet with a yell of terror, shaking off the friendly embrace of an eight-foot python.

"Freddie!" scolded Myrtilla sharply. "Let the gentleman alone!"

"Myrt," said Tobias apologetically, "you *know* I never could stand them snakes!"

"Why, it's only poor little Freddie!" said Myrtilla. "He's the nicest little feller in the world. He wouldn't harm any one. Bless you, Shelley, he just wanted to say howdy!"

"I'll take his word for it," said Tobias grudgingly. He resumed his seat, first casting an anxious eye about him for the rest of Myrtilla's family.

"It ain't no cinch he wasn't going to swaller an arm offen me," grumbled Tobias resentfully. "Him and me ain't on extry terms—and never was."

"I never knew you was bad friends with Freddie!" said Myrtilla in some surprise. "I know dear old Elmer don't like you, but pshaw! that's nothing. He don't like *any* men. Many's the rap on the head he's had from 'em, and he don't forget. Do you want to say hello to Elmer?"

"No!" said Tobias hastily. "Just leave him my card, Myrt, and tell him I was only passin' through and lit and glanced off, like. I never could *abide* them snakes, not even Elmer. I'm willin' to believe that he's a

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right benevolent an' decent ole feller with a good heart an' habits like a deacon. He gits along with wimmin fine, but me? Hardly any, Myrt! I'd as lief have a Mexican with the smallpox around me as them pythons!"

"You just don't *know* 'em, Shelley," argued Myrtilla. She went to a large square basket in the corner of the room and, fumbling about for several seconds, began going through the motions of a deep-sea sailor engaged in sweating home a big hawser. Out of the basket, and none too willingly, came a snake with a body almost as large at its largest as a man's leg and fully eleven feet from the tip of his cold nose to the end of his nervously weaving tail—dear old Elmer, the great grandfather of all the pythons that ever campaigned the Whisker Belt.

Other snakes may be neuter gender snakes, but Elmer, being a perfect old gentleman in every way, shall be "he" and "him" for the purposes of this narrative.

Elmer at once began coiling himself about Myrtilla's waist and Tobias pushed his chair away from the table. Food had lost its charm, for of all the snakes that Tobias K. Cram had seen, and seeing loathed, Elmer headed the list.

It was not that Tobias feared the big python. Tobias abhorred Elmer because of the warm regard which the reptile attracted from Myrtilla. For years the shell man had been jealous of the snake, and in a dim and shadowy way he felt that Elmer understood and reciprocated.

Tobias had known Elmer for ten or twelve years and had never been on a friendly footing with Myrtilla's "eldest." If Elmer had ever cherished any warm regard for the males of the human species, brutal canvasmen had booted it out of him years and years ago before the gray crept into Myrtilla's hair.

Inversely as he hated men, Elmer loved women. Elmer would follow a skirt with the patient insistence of a Broadway masher. A skirt, to Elmer, signified warm milk, guinea pigs to eat and cotton batting when he was cold. Elmer had grown old in the show business and he felt that he understood human nature. A thing which wore trousers would kick him if it got a chance; a thing which wore skirts would feed him and call him "dearie."

The other members of Myrtilla's interesting family were nonentities as compared with the stern individuality of Elmer. Freddie was a temperamental young fool; Sidney was a lunkheaded sort of snake that slept a great deal, and Nellie was a short, fat lady-snake who, if she had been a human being, would have worn a black silk dress and jet jewelry.

Elmer, as he encircled his mistress, eyed Tobias at first with curiosity. He thrust his head toward the shell man, and then withdrawing it hastily, emitted a vehement hiss.

"No," said Tobias sadly, "no, that ole boy don't choose me. And I never spoke a bad word of him in my life."

Elmer slid down to the floor and Tobias leaped upon a chair. Myrtilla laughed as she bundled Elmer back into his cotton batting.

"He's hungry now," said she. "I had to send to Kansas City for a new lot of rabbits and guinea pigs and I'm going to town pretty soon to see if they're in."

Tobias came down from his elevation.

"Myrt," he said plaintively, "have you ever thought of them things I said to you the day I left the show?"

Myrtilla laughed cheerfully.

"Shelley," she said kindly, "you got to show me you can do something besides trimmin' farmers with walnut shells. Mind, I ain't promising a thing, but I might begin to think right seriously if you showed me you could do something with that old bald head of yours!"

"Mebbe," said Tobias K. forlornly, "I'll come back here some day with a bank roll, Myrt."

"If you git one," said the lady, "put it under a porous plaster in the small o' your back. You show me some proof that you can use your head, Shelley, and that'll go a long ways further than a bank roll. You broke?"

Tobias was broke. Myrtilla gave him two dollars, told him when the next westbound train was due and waved him on his way with a pitying shake of her head. The lady of the snakes told the truth when she said that of all her "fellers" she had liked little Shelley Cram the best.

"She wants I should do something with my head!" mused Tobias bitterly, as he trudged along the road. "You got to *have* money to *make* money!"

Tobias envied the snakes back there in their warm beds. They didn't have to ride

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in cold box-cars; they didn't have to get out and hustle up guinea pigs or rabbits or rats —and when Tobias arrived at the rats, he stopped in the middle of the road, facing the largest and most brilliant idea that had come his way in years.

III

THE town council of Watterson—six hard-headed citizens of that thriving but rat-ridden community —sat about the stove in the town hall and debated upon the subject of rats. When they had reached the point where argument seemed vain there arose in the rear of the council-chamber a shabby, depressed-looking little man with a bald head.

"Gen'elmen," said he deprecatingly, "how much money will you pay to get rid of them rats?"

Alderman Weebold answered for the town of Watterson:

"If you got a way to clean 'em out without poisoning all the dogs we got left, we will pay $300 in money."

"Gen'elmen," said Tobias K. Cram earnestly, "I been put to a heavy expense to come here. Make it $500 and I'll talk business."

The council debated long and earnestly, then something was moved and seconded, passed with an assenting murmur and—

"Now then," said Alderman Weebold, "show us how you're goin' to set about it. Mind, you don't git a cent till you've done the work!"

"Come with me, gen'elmen," said Tobias, heaving a sigh of thankfulness. "I'll show you something as will run every rat in Kansas clean out of breath!"

Tobias K. Cram had known that Myrtilla would never trust her precious Elmer in his inexperienced hands; in his heart of hearts he had his doubts whether she would approve of gray ship rats as a diet for the pampered python, but Myrtilla had told him to "use his head" and his head advised him to "borrow" Elmer, chase the rats out of Watterson and return triumphantly with snake and bank roll and lay both at her feet. The end seemed to justify the means, even burglary in the second degree and kidnapping, which crimes were accomplished after Myrtilla went to Comford to see about her shipment of guinea pigs and rabbits.

Turn we now to Elmer, that paragon of a python.

When Elmer's basket went bumping out of Myrtilla's front yard Elmer realized that something unusual was happening to him—something which had never happened before. Trains he knew and the jarring roll of iron wheels, but before all previous trips he had been fed and fondled and comforted with warm milk and guinea pigs. This time there had been no milk and no guinea pigs and every inch of Elmer's eleven feet was hungry, outrageously hungry. And his mistress, where was she?

When Tobias went in to address the council of Watterson he left Elmer's basket in the lobby. Elmer, sensing the end of the journey, jabbed his hard nose against the top of the basket and felt it give slightly. Another jab, this time a resounding thump, and the cover flew off upon the floor. Elmer wriggled out of the basket, a foot at a time, raised his head, looked about him, saw an open door and glided through it into the early evening. All Watterson was before him.

There was but one witness to Elmer's escape. The town drunkard, who had helped a stranger carry a heavy basket from the railroad yards to the town hall, was waiting on the curb for the promised reward.

When that same stranger came bounding into the street, six excited councilmen at his flying heels, the town drunkard was in no case to give testimony. He was lying on his back in the gutter, stiffened with horror, his arms and legs extending in all directions so that he resembled a crab—not a pleasant sight to encounter in a prohibition State.

"Snakes!" he bawled. "Snakes! Millions of 'em! Take 'em off! Help! Snakes!"

The populace, hurrying to the scene to ascertain who was being murdered, felt grievously humbugged; the aldermen saw no connection between the open basket and the familiar hallucinations of Timothy McSherry, and Tobias K. Cram, with a heart turned to water and knees that shook under him, failed to enlighten them.

In a flash of inspiration, it came to him that if the councilmen knew that the rat-reliever were at large by accident, they might refuse the reward. There was only one thing to do and that was to capture Elmer as speedily as possible. Tobias was not particularly anxious to meet "the dear old feller" up a dark alley, but fear sometimes lends a man courage and the job *had* to be done.

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Tobias K. Cram lost himself in the gathering throng and the quest of the pipeless Pied Piper began, while the aldermen inspected the basket carefully and wondered what it had contained and where its owner had gone.

In the meanwhile Elmer, hugging the shadows, turned down the first side street, unobserved save by a dog, which fled howling hysterically, and several score of large ship rats which sat up, flicked their long gray whiskers in mortal fear and plunged into the nearest holes.

Elmer was hunting for Myrtilla; he was hunting for something that wore a skirt. He craved companionship and warm milk and fat guinea pigs and rabbits and he wanted some one to call him "dearie." Undoubtedly Elmer descended in a direct line from that famous first snake which was so friendly with woman.

THE congregation of the Watterson First Church was listening to a discourse by the Rev. Jotham Peabody Booram, and Miss Henrietta Oglesby, spinster, was hurrying to enlist herself as a member of the gathering. Elmer, rolling along in the shade of the fence, spied the flutter of a skirt as Miss Oglesby crossed the road, and followed hard on the spinster's spring heels.

Miss Oglesby paused an instant in the vestibule to adjust her hat, then disappeared through the swinging door just as Elmer slithered up the steps.

Later the congregation became aware of a sudden inrush of cold air and an odd scraping noise in the back of the room as if the "Welcome" mat were being dragged away. The Rev. Jotham Peabody Booram paused in his discourse upon the sin of vanity and his chin fell down upon the third button of his vest. His bulging eyes were glued upon something in the rear of the house. The congregation turned.

There in the center aisle, his head reared high and his beady eyes twinkling benevolently, was dear old Elmer. It gave him keen pleasure to see so many women and he appreciated the warmer atmosphere of the church. Undoubtedly there was food to be had.

The Rev. Jotham Peabody Booram was first to break the frozen silence. With an ear-piercing yell he descended from the pulpit in one mighty bound, and another one carried him through the back door of the edifice. The congregation stampeded with him, women screamed, men bellowed and Miss Oglesby drove herself, a thin wedge, into the solid mass of humanity, crying that the Last Day had come.

Old Mr. Jamison, a retired grocer, who had suffered with rheumatism for many years and moved with a cane and a crutch, awoke from a gentle doze in time to see the last skirt flutter through the back door. He turned about in his seat, glanced down the aisle and immediately thereafter hurled himself through the stained-glass memorial window. He struck the ground with both rheumatic legs revolving at amazing speed and proceeded to set a new world's record for the half mile, sleeping start.

Elmer, pained and slightly puzzled, watched the fluttering, screaming exodus, He then began to search the church for food. The flying congregation filtered through the night, scattering the news in all directions. Timothy McSherry held up his head and said that he had been vindicated.

"I *know* I seen that big feller," he boasted. "He was as long as a Pullman car and he looked like he could eat a cow. I've seen a-many of snakes, gentlemen; I've seen 'em pink and I've seen 'em green and I've seen 'em sky-blue, but gentlemen, that big snake could have et 'em all and hollered for more!"

A dozen men, armed with shotguns, pitchforks, scythes and axes, repaired to the church. The snake was not there. They found traces in the dust outside and took up the trail. Until midnight the Watterson Guards prowled about by lantern-light, searching for Elmer. At twelve o'clock most of the searchers gave up and went to their homes, but during the still watches that followed, Elmer, shivering under a plank sidewalk, heard a voice calling at intervals, a wavering, pitiful note—the voice of Tobias K. Cram:

"Here Elmer! Come Elmer! *Nice* old Elmer!"

SHORTLY after sunrise Mrs. Zachariah Beebee was rolling biscuit dough before an open kitchen window. Mrs. Zachariah Beebee's figure was not unlike Myrtilla's and her hair was gray. Mrs. Zachariah Beebee had heard nothing of the night's adventures and she was very near-sighted without her spectacles.

Elmer, still on the trail of femininity,

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heard a woman's voice uplifted in song. Myrtilla often sang about her work.

> On Jer-dan's stormy banks I stand
> And cast a wishful eye!

Elmer was wriggling down the alley, but he saw the woman at the window and thought he recognized her. He billowed through the back gate, rolled ponderously across the truck-patch and heaved himself up at the open window. Then he bent his neck at right angles with the upreared column and darted his head in at the casement, fairly beaming with delight, if a python may be said to smile. Elmer had often watched Myrtilla make biscuit.

Mrs. Zachariah Beebee did not take time to identify the thing which came licking in across the table, but the heavy rolling-pin was in her right hand and she played safe on the theory that when in doubt it is always well to lead with the heaviest thing handy and seek explanations afterward. As Elmer came bulging forward with the affectionate intention of caressing this gray-haired lady, Mrs. Zachariah Beebee swung the rolling-pin from her apron strings and batted Elmer squarely on the side of the head with all the strength of her one hundred and seventy-eight pounds.

"*Scat, you!*" shrilled the good woman and Elmer scatted with a lump on the side of his jaw the size of a tangerine. Elmer's philosophy of life went to smash then and there. A woman had done this thing to him! A *woman!*

Elmer rippled dizzily out of the back yard and Mrs. Zachariah Beebee secured her first glimpse of her late visitor. She promptly went into hysterics, a very proper thing to do under the circumstances.

Elmer's heart was broken. Elmer's head ached frightfully. Elmer's experience of human nature was ripped to ribbons. His confidence in skirted humans had been destroyed.

He nursed his wounded head underneath a convenient barn where he remained for several hours. He then arrived at a definite conclusion. This town was no good place for snakes.

Elmer decided to move immediately. He wriggled out from under the barn, glided down the alley, took the first turning and soon found himself in the middle of Watterson's main street. The broad avenue of escape seemed open. Away went Elmer down the middle of the thoroughfare, traveling with all the speed at his command.

As Elmer unlimbered he was sighted by a group of men who were poking under sidewalks and buildings farther up the street. The men were armed with every conceivable sort of weapon from the muzzle-loading rifle of "Bleeding Kansas" to the cavalry saber.

With a whoop and a yell these men gave chase and a tumult boiled through the main artery of Watterson's commerce, with Elmer making the best of his long lead. Bullets began pecking the ground on all sides, stones and other missiles filled the air. Decidedly this was no good place for a snake.

A citizen came rushing from his house, armed with a shotgun. Rabbit-loads at thirty yards will never kill an eleven foot python, but they will irritate him seriously, and Elmer, whirling by under a raking fire, was sown thick and deep with a powerful irritant.

In the distance Elmer saw another group of people advancing to meet him. It was no time to pause for reflection. Another blast from the shotgun spurred Elmer from the rear. He did not know what the disposition of the human beings in front might be, but he felt that he had sampled the treatment he might expect from those behind him. Elmer decided that he would hurl himself through the approaching barrier. It was liberty he wanted, and if he could not have liberty, he would buy a little death as dearly as possible.

IV

MYRTILLA turned Comford upside down in her search for the missing Elmer. On the morning of the second day of her bereavement the railroad telegraph operator had news for her.

"The man at Watterson says the whole town is out on a snake hunt," said the operator. "He says they've got a snake down there forty feet long. Stands to reason he must belong to you. The way I get it, a feller brought the snake to town to clean out the rats and the snake got loose and run the whole town up a tree. This mornin' they've turned the whole place out on a snake hunt and if you want to save this pet of yours, you'd better go boomin' down to Watterson on Number Four. I'll hang out the board if you say so."

Myrtilla went booming down to Watter-

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son on Number Four, and before she left Comford she had food for thought. The operator had secured from his friend in Watterson an accurate description of the man who had brought the snake to town. Shelley Cram, beyond a doubt!

The Comford key-pounder apprised the Watterson man that the owner of the snake was on Number Four, consequently Myrtilla was met at the station by a crowd of curious citizens, who babbled incoherently of enormous snakes.

"Huh!" sniffed Myrtilla scornfully. "Some of you prohibition drunks here been seeing visions!"

She tramped away toward that portion of Watterson where Elmer had last been reported. In the distance she saw a cloud of dust, behind which men were running. The boom of light artillery and the *spat-spat-spat* of a scattering infantry fire came to her ears together with a discordant yelling. Then in the foreground of that lively picture Myrtilla made out the rapidly heaving folds of a great snake.

Thus it happened that dear old Elmer, tingling from nose to tail from shotgun fire, fleeing for his wretched life and prepared to sell what remained as dearly as possible, heard a familiar voice uplifted in the terrific uproar and saw before him the figure of his mistress.

"Come to his mother! Poor old Elmer! Oh, the poor old boy! Come to his mother!"

And poor old Elmer came. Myrtilla crouched and braced herself for the shock as Elmer literally hurled himself into her sheltering arms. If Elmer had been a child he would have sobbed out the story of his wo. If he had been a dog he would have wagged his tail. Being only a snake, Elmer puffed and blew hysterically and nosed Myrtilla's ear with lightning rapidity as if he would tell her of the crimes that had been done upon his person.

This was the amazing picture which halted the pursuers as so many statues. One man was equal to the occasion. He thrust himself forward and cocked his shotgun.

"Hold right still, ma'am!" he panted. "Hold right still! I'll git him!"

Myrtilla screamed.

"You dast to hurt Elmer and I'll take that fool gun away from you and wear it out over your head!"

Elmer hissed valiantly and the volunteer backed into the crowd. Myrtilla surveyed the armed delegation with blazing eyes.

"A lot of good-for-nothing louts!" she cried. "Ain't you ashamed of yourselves, abusing a poor harmless snake? You'd ought to be! And them hussies I see standing around! They ought to go back home and wash their babies! Trollops!"

That was only the beginning—the text of Myrtilla's message to the good people of Watterson. Myrtilla had not traveled with a sideshow for twenty years for nothing. She had a wonderful vocabulary when she chose to use it. By ones and twos her audience shriveled and faded away before the fires of her wrath.

After a time she found herself standing alone in the middle of the street and looking into the eyes of a guilty little man with a bald head and a quivering chin.

"*You!*" shrilled Myrtilla. "You done this, Shelley Cram!"

Tobias bowed his head and there were real tears in his eyes.

"What for did you go and steal my Elmer, Shelley?" she demanded.

Tobias almost blubbered.

"Y-you told me to use my head, Myrt," he whimpered. "I was after that rat money so's I could show you I could do something besides throw the shells. I was going to bring him back as soon as he run the rats out of town, but he got away and—and——"

Myrtilla could not find it in her woman's heart to be too hard upon this cringing miscreant whose eyes pleaded guilty and begged for mercy. He had done this thing in order that he might find favor. As Myrtilla reflected upon this phase of the situation the anger died out of her eyes to be replaced by pity.

"You poor old feller!" she said gently. "You never did have no judgment and I guess you never will. You got Elmer in an awful jam and I wouldn't have had him so abused for all the money in Kansas, but I'm goin' to forgive you, Shelley. You better come back to Comford with me and I'll put you in Winter quarters along with the snakes. You need a keeper worse'n Elmer does, and I can see by the look in his eyes that he won't be no better'n a plumb eediot therest of his days!"

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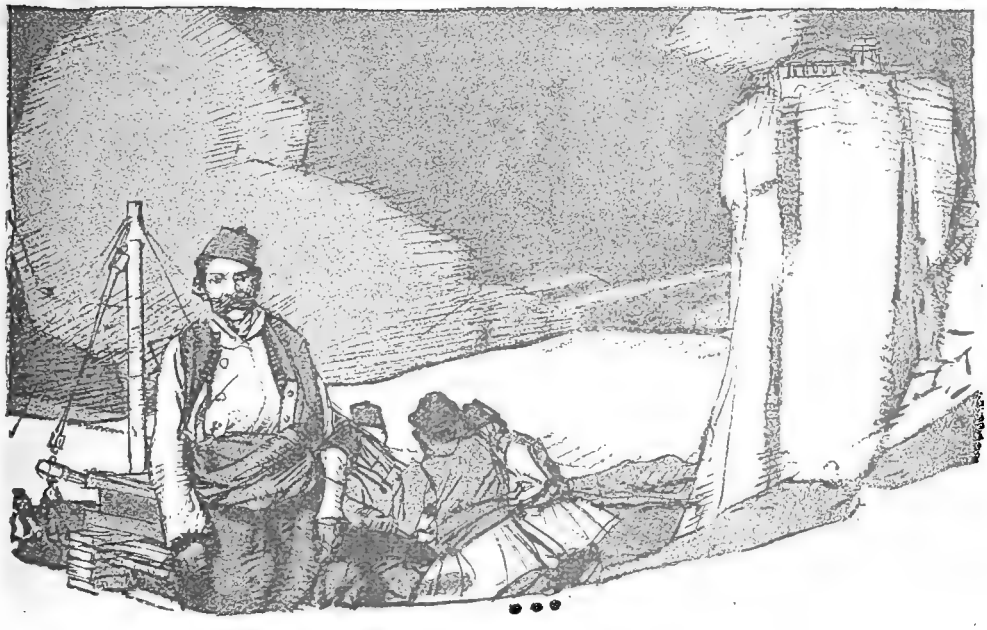

The Road

A Romance of Americans in the Balkans

by Frank Savile

CHAPTER I

HERCULES AT WORK

THE avenue dipped between high banks as it approached the turn toward the railroad track, and Agnew, as he paced along it, experienced a sudden vivid sense of refreshment in the red of the earth and the green of the foliage that rose between him and the city's distant cloud of smoke.

For a full week the sounds of the engine-shop had filled his ears. His eyes, he realized it with suddenness, craved relief from the duns and grays of whirling belt and grinding lathe. A rush of longing for the open, unfettered life rioted in his veins. Memory fled back across the years, carrying him in imagination down a dozen trails through forest, marsh and plain. His theodolite had passed them all and left the ordered tracks behind.

And now? Streets, smoke, grime, the contact of a huddled million of his fellows! He had had enough! Somehow, somewhere, Freedom waited and was calling aloud. A new sound broke in upon his reflections—the sound of a woman's voice in anger—the crack of a whip. He wheeled round the curve of the road which discovered the level crossing almost at his feet.

A light two-wheeled runabout was across the track. In the shafts a bright chestnut pony stood immovable, its ears laid back, its quarters slanted obstinately in, its eyes round and staring. They were fixed upon the telegraph-wires that bordered the road. From these the dilapidated remains of a boy's kite swung in the breeze. With every rustle of the ragged paper the pony shivered, but otherwise remained motionless as if the rails were magnets.

A girl held the reins, chucked at the bit, raised the whip and brought it down smartly upon the shivering flanks. The pony

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shrank, but did not budge its foothold by an inch. The whip fell again.

Agnew advanced and raised his hat. "Can I lead him?" he asked.

The girl flushed. "No, please," she answered quickly. "I must conquer him myself! It is obstinacy—nothing else!"

She raised the whip again and this time the thong fell with the full force of her wrist. The pony raised a foot and—put it down again. It was almost as if he had stamped it with defiance.

Agnew stood aside, waiting. The situation could not be prolonged. This was the main Netteville branch. Freighters and ore trains from the mines passed along it at intervals of not more than half an hour. And there was a not infrequent passenger service.

He looked at the girl keenly. Her hat was drawn slantingly across the side of her face, shading it to the level of her eyes. And these, dark though they were, for the moment, at least, held no melting tints. They were fixed relentlessly, almost fiercely, upon the little horse. Her chin was squared to obstinacy, to a pitch as uncompromising, Agnew told himself, as that embodied in the thick-set, immovable body in the shafts. It was a contest of wills—on one side plus a whip. Against this handicap the pony set mere weight and inertness. The lash that curled round its sleek little ribs might have represented a May-fly's buzzing. It was hypnotized by the rustling sheets of paper.

AGNEW was aware that amid her activities with the whip, the girl shot him a swift side glance. A sudden sense of awkwardness gripped him. Its meaning was obvious; he intruded. But a girl can not be left to herself on a railroad track in constant service to deal with a situation from which her own methods promise no present road of escape.

Agnew drew back a step or two, but lingered. His muscular arms rose slightly and then fell with a little helpless movement. The consciousness of his strength rose within him and brought a smile to his face. He could unharness the little mutineer and *carry* it off the track if she would but allow him!

A sudden sound made his heart leap furiously. The clang of a bell came singing down the breeze—the bell of the locomotive passing the next crossing not a furlong up the line! He knew that its belching smokestack would rush into view round the curve within a matter of seconds. He leaped down upon the track and held out his arms.

"Jump!" he cried insistently. "It's coming—it's on us! Jump!"

The girl hesitated, half rose in her seat, and then, setting her lips together with a fierce inarticulate sound, lashed out at the defier of her purposes with one last petulant stroke. It had its effect. The pony shook itself, bucked—and *backed!* Unsteadied by the unexpected movement, the girl stumbled, caught her foot in the reins, and fell across the dashboard, her fingers catching unavailingly for support at Agnew's outthrust hand!

The roar grew to ominous notes of nearness—swelled—and amid the clangors of the pealing bell and the full-opened throttle the locomotive swung into view not fifty yards away. The cart, the pony and the two human beings were in the very center of its path.

The situation from that moment became for Agnew devoid of all sense of reality. Events passed as in delirium and with delirium's freakish swiftness. His tall body bent, as some great bow of yew might bend, to release its tension.

And here a tension was indeed released, and to some purpose. Agnew's shoulder sank below the back of the cart, found purchase, and with all the forces of his forest-bred strength behind it, shot up and forward. The shafts mounted, thrust the collar up the pony's neck, swept him off his feet! With one and the same terrific hurling movement the man rushed horse and cart and its human contents across the ballast, free of the rails, down into the bed of the ditch at the foot of the telegraph-pole, stumbled and fell, stretched out upon it, his breath coming in the great gasps of a man whose forces have been taxed up to nature's limit!

From beneath the weight of his inert arm the girl looked up to see the monstrous bulk of the engine thunder by; to see the white, wide-eyed wonder of the engineer's face glare at her from the cab; to watch, as in a dream, the blur of passing windows, and then to be left coughing in the reek of the low-lying smoke, her heart throbbing to the knowledge that never again till the light of day passed from her eternally would she look deeper within the eyes of Death.

The weight that was pressing upon her

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was removed. The man was stirring. He slid from the panel of the cart, rose to his knees, and then slowly to his feet. Still panting, he looked down. Concern grew in his eyes.

"You're hurt?" he questioned thickly. "I—I was awkward, but—but——"

She gave a tiny laugh—a short sharp sound, with no ring of mirth in it, with, indeed, some undertone of exasperation. She held out her hand.

"Please?" she said suggestively, and found her fingers grasped and herself dragged to her feet in one swift motion of ascent.

FOR a moment she stood trying to catch a clean breath out of the smoke-tainted air. Her hand rose to her throat, her eyes to the level of her rescuer's face. Wonder had been the dominant expression in them. She herself, the cart, the pony, had been flung a matter of yards by the brawn of this man's shoulder! Wonder grew into admiration. She looked at the great chest, still rising and falling with the throb of effort. She recognized the massive molding of the limbs—the elastic poise of the whole frame. And then a sense of comedy shook her. For the expression on this Titan's face was one of—apology!

She laughed again, this time with a real ring of amusement. "Your 'awkwardness' saved my life!" she smiled.

He looked relieved. His lips drooped his yellow mustache into an answering smile. "There was so little time to think," he explained.

"I wonder if any one ever acted quite so promptly?" she said. "Action involves thought, doesn't it? And where in the world can I find a proper form of thanks? You were—astounding! There is no other word for it."

He made a deprecating little shrug and half turned from her toward the pony, who was kicking petulantly amid the tangle of the harness, its back wedged firmly into the angle of the ditch.

"If you are sure you are not hurt, I'll see to putting this right," he said, with a comprehensive gesture that took in pony, cart and scattered cushions.

She shook her head; she gathered her brows in a tiny frown. "No," she said quietly. "My thanks are not to be put aside like that. You have just performed a very wonderful and intrepid feat—you have done me an immeasurable service. Mayn't I offer you all the return that is possible to me—my gratitude?"

"Thank you," he said gravely. "It has been a great happiness to have had the chance to serve you—to serve your father's daughter."

Her surprise became questioning. "You know me?"

He bowed. "By sight, Miss Gresham," he explained quietly. "In common with most of your father's employees, I have had several opportunities of knowing who you were."

For a moment she debated. Then her face lighted. "Then you," she cried in sudden conviction, "are the new consultant engineer, you came only a week ago, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Agnew," he said. "Gervase Agnew. Yes, I am helping your father with his contract and specifications for his new European venture—the Bir Railway."

CHAPTER II

MISS GRESHAM SEES POSSIBILITIES

"OH!" THE interjection came with a breath of subdued disappointment. She hesitated. "You don't look like—like a consultant," she demurred. "You look like—like a man who *does* things. You have proved it, indeed!" she added quickly, with a side glance toward the wreckage in the ditch.

He laughed pleasantly. He held out his hands. The palms were rough and seamed and scored. "And these are witnesses against me, too," he agreed. "Yes, I have spent the last ten years *doing* things. Insensibly I have acquired experience. Now your father has thought fit to ask me to specify things for other men to do."

"In Europe?"

"Yes, in Montenegro, Albania, and various other parts of the Balkan Peninsula—anywhere where the jealousies of half a dozen Governments finally allow the Bir Railway to be laid. When your father won the contract I doubt, if you will excuse my saying so, if he quite realized what he was up against politically. I have had a little experience of the country. That, of course, is a help. But most of my knowledge of mountain railway work I acquired in Canada and the West. My notions will cross the Atlantic for other men to deal with."

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HE TURNED, as he spoke, and, without seeking further permission, bent over the struggling pony, avoided the ungoverned kicks it was delivering at the empty air, got the purchase of his knee below its withers, and rolled it over on its side. With a jerk of the bridle he swung it to its feet, one splintered shaft breaking away from it into two pieces as the cart rose with it. With a twitch or two he released the traces and drew the little horse back toward the road. The wheels, no longer restrained, carried the wreck of panel and shaft back into the ditch, where, for the moment, he left them.

Methodically he tied the pony to a sapling.

She watched him without speaking. The effortless ease with which he dealt with the situation, the practised hands he laid upon the animal, all spoke to her eloquently of the man he was. One entirely used to confronting the vagaries of Chance, filled with the experience which meets all practical issues with calm, and above all endowed with Nature's most becoming gift to a man of action—great physical strength. A natural instinct stirred within herself, a heritage willed to her wide centuries back from the great mother of us all — the woman's admiration for the forces of thew and sinew expressed in the male.

He turned toward her again. He stood, looking down and reflecting over the broken shaft. He opened his lips to speak, hesitated, and then smiled in sudden inspiration. He walked across the track to the wire fence which bounded it on the side farthest from them. He leaned down and tore out a couple of the quarter-inch strands as if they had been so much worsted. She drew in her breath with a little gasp of wonder. He came back, unwinding the ply of the wire.

"These and my pocket-knife are all that are required," he announced. "I shall splice your shaft and send you safely on your way within a quarter of an hour."

She smiled up at him and gave a little nod of conviction. "Yes," she answered, "I'm sure you will. And if I should happen to want a forty-foot pine pulled down or a five-ton boulder pulled up, you'd do a little thing like that for me, too, wouldn't you—Hercules?"

His eyebrows lifted with a sort of humorous surprise. Then he flushed faintly. There was contriteness in his tone. "I—I don't try to show off," he pleaded. "I can't help being strong and—and using my strength, you understand."

"And for heaven's sake why should you?" she cried, almost fiercely. "I like—I love to see it! What is a man for but to be strong—a live man, that is, not the sawdust mannikins from the office or the store!"

"But they *are* strong—and brainy, too!" he protested. "They read—they know half a hundred things that I shall never have time to learn."

He went on methodically unwinding the wire and looking down at her with a curious expression, half inquiry, half concern.

She laughed again. "You aren't complimenting my father, who has chosen you as his consultant engineer," she reminded him. "He has not a reputation for employing dunderheads."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I dare say I know my own particular job as well as the next one," he said carelessly, and bent over the overturned cart. "I was alluding to matters in general," he went on, and whisked the overturned wheels into place with a single movement of his wrist.

"Cart mending, wire splicing, and so on?" she suggested.

He grinned frankly. "No. Art—all the jolly things of life," he said. "I've never had, and never shall have, the time to understand them. But I think I could enjoy them very much."

HE LEANED the sound shaft against the bank and began to splice the broken one with deft, methodical fingers. As the wire lapped round it, holding the two portions firmly in place, he shook it up and down, testing it. He laid it down with a sigh of satisfaction.

"That's a good job well done, isn't it?" she asked quickly. "What more do you ask of Art than that? The joy of creation? Doesn't that suffice you?"

He surveyed her doubtfully. "I was taught to consider Art as painting pictures, or writing poems, or playing real music," he demurred.

"And you were taught—where?" she asked.

"In my home—Algerville, Canada," he answered.

"I knew you couldn't be an American—your accent told me that," she answered. "Well, I congratulate Canada and the British Empire on producing you!"

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"I *am* an American and my accent is—is *your* accent," he protested. "You people who happen to live in the middle of the Continent seem to think that the Dominion and Mexico are in China!"

She smiled to herself, a gratified little smile. He had spoken hotly; his physical placidity did not imply a stolid mental aspect; his feelings could be roused. It was at the target of this discovery that she had sped her conversational arrow and found the bull's-eye. This man could be—would be—made interesting.

He was drawing forward the mended cart and putting the scattered cushions in place. He released the pony, harnessed it, adjusted the reins and laid them invitingly on the dash.

"There now," he said, and smiled.

She did not move. She stood, submitting him to examination. Her eyes searched him up and down with frank and keen obervation. He met her glance curiously—finally with a sort of comic resentment.

"I can't help it. No doubt I need brushing up," he allowed, looking down at the dust on his knees.

She shook her head.

"No," she decided. "We'll try, if you like, but I don't think I should care to see you tidy. It's not—it's not your pose. I should be obliged, Mr. Agnew, if you could drive me home."

He started. His face became anxious.

"You are not badly shaken—or hurt?" he cried.

"Not in the least. Why?"

"I—I thought——" He stammered and broke off. "Of course I shall be delighted," he said quickly.

She walked toward the cart and then halted with an exclamation. "The step's broken!" she said, pointing.

He measured the distance from the ground to the footboard with his eye. "You can't manage that?" he inquired.

"I never even passed the beginner's course in acrobatics," she smiled.

He gave his mustache a tug; this time inspiration passed him by. He looked searchingly round, as if footstools might be found in the ditch or on the track.

She watched him, still smiling and expectant. He looked at her, suddenly. Her eyes? They were demure and perfectly unconcerned, but they held a message. Surely, or how do we explain Agnew's next action?

He held out his arms. "If you don't mind this way?" he suggested and, without asking or awaiting permission, picked her up and placed her gently on the seat. She settled back on it with a sigh of thorough content.

He swung himself up beside her and took up the reins. With a snort the little horse flung itself forward into the harness and trotted doggedly away from the remains of that still fluttering kite.

CHAPTER III

GLAISHER SPEAKS HIS MIND

"I'VE come to the conclusion that we Americans have lost the natural aspect toward our women," said Gordon Glaisher. "The way we treat them isn't"—he hesitated, casting about for a word—"isn't *business*," he concluded, bringing his lips together with a snap.

The man who sat opposite him smiled indulgently. It is doubtful whether Thorpe Gresham, president of the Netteville & Central Road, had given two thoughts in the last twenty years to such a subject. In his early manhood he had married a woman who, among a thousand other women, had suddenly appeared to him as utterly desirable. He had not paused to analyze his emotions. Every nerve and instinct in his perfectly organized intelligence had been set on winning her and he had won, as he had won most of the battles of life. And then Fate had robbed him of her. He had been left a widower before he was thirty, passion withered within him; and Gresham, with affections stunted and cut back, had flung the whole of his abundant energies into the channels of his business. Success and its attaining had absorbed him.

He probed bluntly for the cause of Glaisher's discontent. "What has Katrine been doing?" he asked.

Glaisher drummed his fingers on the office table. "To be candid, I don't know," he answered. "I scarcely ever see her."

"Ah!" The smile still hung about Gresham's lips. "Is my paternal interference being called for?"

Glaisher made a little gesture which, perhaps, implied protest.

"To be absolutely frank, Mr. Gresham, I don't think you have much influence with her. She has, all her life, done exactly as she has pleased!"

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Thorpe Gresham looked at his partner meditatively. For a moment he was silent. Then he lifted his shoulders in a shrug. "I'm inclined to think she has. And I have never attempted to do anything about it. I believe she is fond of me—quite fond. I have never had the desire or the opportunity to—to oppose her. The matter of your engagement? Was I consulted there? I can't remember it."

Glaisher shook his head. "We took your approval for granted. We had it?"

"Of course. You were my partner; you were constantly associated with me. It appeared to me natural. I saw no reason to be anything but—satisfied."

Glaisher smiled—a dry little smile. He nodded slowly. "I don't seem to get your outlook—I almost wish I could. For, to be frank again, I don't think I am—satisfied. Have you ever dived for prizes in a Thanksgiving bran-pie?"

Gresham made a startled movement. "Eh?" he demurred in amazement.

"Perhaps it wasn't included in your kindergarten studies. You fill a barrel with bran, hiding as many toys in it as there are children. Each has a dip. There is a prize for each one, but there is always a sort of king prize. Do you begin to get my meaning?"

"No," said Gresham with absolute confidence. "Not a vestige of it."

"Well, I reckon this town of Netteville is the barrel. She happened to pick me. I was *not* the king prize. I was just a way-down common toy."

"But your parallel isn't exact," urged Gresham, suddenly interested. "She *saw* the other prizes—and picked *you*."

"I shoved myself into her hand," said Glaisher. "So she began to play with me. But she saw no reason to leave off playing with the other toys; she never *has* left it off. As long as she played with the whole lot, I saw nothing to be alarmed at. But if she fancies she has found the king prize since, and is inclined to lick the paint off the cheap tin soldier—that's me—and fling him behind the stove to melt, why then, I kick!"

GRESHAM'S forehead grew puckered; his fingers tugged his white mustache. His eyes never left his partner's face, but they seemed to be occupied with an inward rather than an outward vision. He sighed, and in the sound there was an echo of self-reproach.

"My parental interference *is* being invoked," he affirmed.

Again Glaisher shook his head. "No," he said. "At least not as a parent. As an employer—if at all."

For the second time a look of blank lack of comprehension filled Gresham's eyes to be followed by a frown of irritation. He leaned forward. "Gordon," he said, "let's get down to explicit facts. What is the trouble, anyway?"

Gordon Glaisher paused, meditated, opened his lips on one form of words, chose another, and finally spoke with crispness.

"I came in on the 10.18 this morning, Mr. Gresham. It was thirty-five minutes behind time because a safety-plug blew out. The incident is typical of what our running and locomotive stock is come to. It needs something near a million spent on it. Half our new debenture flotation will go to this account, I take it."

"Naturally. That we have already discussed."

"That flotation goes through by the aid of Mr. Isidore Blakstein. He underpins the market."

"Precisely. Why repeat facts thoroughly understood by both of us?"

Glaisher sat up in his chair. The slight nervousness that had accompanied his opening sentences was gone. His coolness grew more and more marked. "Mr. Blakstein is my uncle. It is due to this fact alone—though I have never desired before to insist upon it—that his backing is behind us. I think I must make that clear."

"That may be clear to yourself, Gordon," said Gresham dryly. "I must reserve my own opinion. Mr. Blakstein is a thorough business man."

"We are a business family, I hope," answered Glaisher in tones that were very perfectly controlled. "We are clannish as well. Mr. Blakstein believes that he is putting his shoulder up against the Netteville & Central because his nephew and his nephew's prospective father-in-law are the concern's managing directors."

A slight flush had grown upon Gresham's face. By a slight non-committal gesture he indicated that he was awaiting further explanation.

"Bluntly, if I do not marry Katrine I should leave Netteville. I should not remain here to see her marry any one else. I should resign my seat on your board. In that case

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you could not expect to find Mr. Blakstein on your side of the market."

"On the opposite side, then?" queried Gresham sharply.

"How can I say? The matter becomes one of pure business. But without this debenture flotation I hardly see where our new rolling-stock is to come from. Without new rolling-stock——" He shrugged his shoulders. "That point, at least, I need not elaborate," he concluded.

Gresham sat up firmly in his chair. "I am being threatened," he said quietly. "That is another point that needs no elaboration. I am being asked to use parental pressure, or even parental threats, to my own daughter—as a business necessity. I need hardly say how I regard that proposition!"

"No," agreed Glaisher. "I am perfectly aware how you would regard it, or any man who dared put it to you. You are not being threatened, Mr. Gresham, and that is *not* the proposition. As I said before, it is as an employer I need your assistance, not as Katrine's father."

The elder man looked at him keenly. "How?"

"Get rid of Gervase Agnew," said Glaisher coolly and promptly.

GRESHAM made an uncontrollable movement of surprise. "Agnew? The Canadian? The engineer?"

Glaisher nodded. "*He* is the king prize, if any one is. Katrine has known him three weeks. As you know, he practically saved her life at Desert Avenue crossing. He is a man of abnormal physical attainments. She is already causing comment by her admiration of his strength—and him."

Gresham rose and began to walk silently to and fro. Then he flung himself back in his chair.

"I've never sought, and she has never offered me, her confidence, Gordon," he said. "I—I only just begin to realize that—I don't know her!"

Glaisher nodded gravely. "She has been entirely independent of every one," he answered. "I am putting it to you now that you may begin to show your interest in and influence over her. You *wish* me to marry her?"

For the third time Gresham surveyed his partner with that keen, speculative glance. It was as if a collector examined an entirely new and hitherto unsuspected specimen in his own cabinet.

"Yes," he allowed slowly. "Yes, I suppose I do. But that is another thing to which I have never given a thought, Gordon—not a serious thought, that is to say. The engagement and you I have always taken for granted."

"We are at one in our desires, then. Do you approve my methods?"

Again Gresham kept silence, staring at a picture of the imagination visible to himself alone. He laughed. "I think Fate is with you, Gordon." He turned and displaced some papers to disclose a cable-form. He handed it across the table. Glaisher read the half dozen words of the message aloud:

"Sanders dead. Have you duplicate plans?
THRING."

He whistled. "And that means—what?" he asked.

Gresham shrugged his shoulders. "It can mean only one thing—Sanders' plans have disappeared. Naturally I have duplicate specifications, but are we to understand that Thring, after nearly a year's work, did not possess Sanders' confidence? It's absurd!"

Glaisher took up the cable-form and reread it. "Dated only an hour ago," he said. "Perhaps it was sudden. Perhaps Thring is rattled and has not made a proper investigation. Perhaps——"

He paused suddenly, a light of intelligence growing over his face. He gave a short laugh. "I see what you mean about Fate!" he cried. "You'll send Agnew? Why of course you will!"

Gresham smiled dryly. "Doesn't the finger of Providence point that way? He has had Balkan experience; he is a most capable engineer."

"The fingers of Providence and of common sense and of opportunity are all in a line!" grinned Glaisher eagerly. "Will he go, though?"

Gresham looked at the clock. "I've sent for him. I sent for him before this last notion struck me," he replied. "He's probably waiting in the outer office now."

Glaisher rose. "I'll send him up. As a business necessity he ought to catch the first boat. You can't leave Thring single-handed among all those cut-throats—and with no plans."

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Gresham nodded. "Side-track all other callers and send him up at once, Gordon."

CHAPTER IV

KATRINE MAKES A MISTAKE

AS GRESHAM sat waiting, his fist closed upon his chin, his elbow leaned wearily upon the table. For the first time in his successful career the road before him had pointed to—possible failure?

He drew his lips firmly together. No, he could not afford to antagonize his partner, and Agnew was, after all, the very man for the post at Bir. He sat up alertly. As the door opened he fashioned his lips into a welcoming smile.

It was not Agnew who entered. It was Katrine.

He looked at her in a queer silence, which held within its core something ominous, almost menacing. He had to moisten his lips before he could speak. "You?" he said interrogatively. "I was expecting—Mr. Agnew."

She nodded. "Mr. Agnew is outside—I found him here on my arrival. And I have seen Gordon; he is waiting, too, for I have something to say to him. I thought I [illegible] to say it to [illegible] to permit this—this understanding. The meaning of the thing? I never paused before to consider it."

"Yes," he agreed. "And is not want of consideration your mistake now? Are you not acting on impulse?"

She shook her head decidedly. "No," she said. "On instinct. I can not do it. And there is no slur on Gordon. He has behaved—honorably. To begin with, there was no formal engagement. It has never been given out."

"That will not prevent his requiring—and rightly requiring—your reasons."

She was silent. Then she raised her eyes to look at him intently. A queer expression, half speculative, half defiant, grew in them.

He spoke again, his voice incisive, his manner detached. "As your father, let me advise you to pause. Take—what shall we say—a week, to decide."

He rose, came toward her; he held her hand. She saw, without understanding, the half-concealed anxiety with which he was awaiting her decision. It came home to her with sudden conviction that he had never asked of her before—anything. Her instinct was entirely to adhere to her decision; she knew that it would be unalterable. But a new-born desire to show filial feeling in this [illegible] with her father in a problem [illegible] their joint lives made her [illegible] moment's silence she [illegible] then—gave way to

[illegible] e—but as you

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IT OPENED again to show Agnew's massive limbs framed by the jambs and lintel. He stood hesitant. "You are likely to require me for some time, Mr. Gresham?"

The other inclined his head courteously. "As long as possible, subject, of course, to any pressing engagement you have."

Agnew did not close the door. "It is not exactly a matter of business," he explained. "Miss Gresham, it appears, has never been inside our repair-shops. I have just arranged that she should return with me and be shown over them. Perhaps I had better inform her that this must be postponed?"

Gresham pointed to a chair. "If you will excuse me, it is a matter I will see to myself," he said. He passed into the outer office, closing the door behind him. During the three minutes of his absence Agnew sat meditative.

He looked up as his employer returned. Gresham was smiling. He emphasized the smile by a little gesture of mock despair. "Trust a woman to be in two minds in a morning!" he laughed. "I suggested to Katrine that, as he happens to be one of the managing directors of the road, a fit and competent person to show her over the shops was her fiancé."

He spoke lightly, carelessly, probing for papers through the mass of them which encumbered his table. His back was toward the engineer. There was a silence. Gresham continued his search—and his comments.

"No," he went on, "as *you* couldn't be her escort, her scientific yearnings withered on the spot. Poor Gordon went away feeling—perhaps not unjustifiably—jealous."

He turned as he spoke and faced the other across the table. Agnew's eyes were steady. But he looked older—by years—since the moment, only three minutes back, when he entered the room.

"I did not know of their engagement," he said, very slowly and quietly.

"An old standing affair," said Gresham, without emphasis and with the air of one discussing trivialities. "First, will you kindly read that?" he added, placing in the other's hands the cable-form from Bir.

Agnew took it dully, read it, but read no meaning into the words. The foundations of faith were broken up—all womanhood was being thrust from its pedestal in his mind—a pedestal which till three short weeks before he had never found the time or the occasion to erect. Unconsciously he put his hand to his collar, as if to ease the flooding beat of the arteries from his unsteadily throbbing heart. And then, with an effort, he regained a grip on his self-possession. He reread the cablegram slowly, and aloud. Then he looked up.

"You understand it?" he asked quietly.

Gresham shook his head. "Not entirely. Sanders was, professionally, a man in a thousand, but"—he shook his head again—"rumors have come to us by a side wind that all was not well at his end. His reports have been—odd for the last week or two. He was evidently not himself. And Thring? He is a good boy—but a boy. We need a man there—immediately."

Agnew looked up dully, heavily. "Yes?" he inquired. "Yes?"

Gresham leaned toward him. "Will you go to Bir?" he asked with slow emphasis on each monosyllable, and then sat back, awaiting his answer.

Agnew's face lit first with surprise, then with incredulity and finally shadowed over with irresolution. He frowned, considered, let his gaze wander round the room, but by the time it returned to his employer's face there was decision in it.

"Yes," he said. A certain glow of interest mastered the shadows. "Yes. I'll go."

Gresham's eyes gleamed in pleasure. "When?" he asked laconically, looking at the clock.

Agnew's glance followed the same direction. "As soon as you hand me the specifications," he said. "By the first train available."

The poise of his body was suddenly alert. His lips set, his brows knitted. And Gresham rightly interpreted these signs as a defiance flung in the face of Fate's challenge to a worthy combat.

CHAPTER V

JOVAN

AS THE little Austrian coasting steamer pulled on her warp ropes and edged up to the new-made quay, Agnew came out of the companionway on to the deck and looked about him. He drew a deep breath, first in surprise and then in almost incredulous amusement. This was Antigno!

A collection of wooden shacks, inter-

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spersed with meanly built hovels of unhewn stone! This was the coastal end of the Bir Railway, the line which was exciting diplomatic heart-burning in nearly every chancellery of Central Europe! This—this *ash-heap!*

He laughed quietly. Then his lips met each other with the firmness of resolution. Antigno needed something—something that would lift it and the road to which it was the portal nearer the level of its reputation. What it needed, Agnew opined, without conceit but with determination, was—*himself*. Were they going to get busy on the road to Bir? He laughed again, dryly. He reckoned they were—or something was going to break. The inertia of the working population, for choice.

As the hull squeezed the fenders against the masonry of the quay his eyes fell upon a man who stood in the center of the little crowd gathered to watch the steamer's incoming. He was tall, as tall as Agnew's self, broad of shoulder, erect, and military of appearance. He was dressed in tight-fitting clothes of white serge braided with black. Well on the back of his head was a tiny round cap of red with the same somber edging. Agnew's Balkan experience told him that this was an Albanian.

The man was watching him with close attention, but his curiosity had nothing that was offensive in it. He stood rather as an observer, a critic, desiring detailed information. And he showed—Agnew felt this as an instinct and with a strange sense of elation—approval.

The gangway was rushed aboard; fifty Montenegrins and Italians raced across it and fell upon the half dozen passengers, clamoring to use their powers upon the inconsiderable heap of baggage. Agnew used his powers forcefully but with method. Out of the ensuing discussion which assumed the dimensions of a limited riot, Agnew regained his property and turned to face the Albanian, who stood, saluting respectfully and supporting the case of instruments.

"These eaters of dirt," said the man in Italian, and indicating the human storm that raged about him, "are no fit carriers for gear such as this which needs infinite care. I was expecting you, signor. I served the Signor Sanders. I was his assistant. I came to meet a new master. I praise God that I have found—a man!"

He looked Agnew squarely in the eyes.

"We need such, signor," he said quietly, and then turned to point toward the quay. "I have a trolley, there, and a gang. If it is your will, we will transport you and your baggage to the main camp at Slivnitz by way of the track in a couple of hours. Signor Thring has there a hut prepared for you."

Agnew nodded. "And your name?" he asked.

"Jovan Vaco, at your service, signor. And my home is in Bir."

He turned and beckoned. A couple of men upon the quay detached themselves from the company of half a dozen others whom Agnew noticed for the first time. They were lean, bronzed fellows, these, clad, all of them, in the same costume of white which their leader wore, but their clothes were stained and ragged. Beside them was a trolley. Agnew realized that rails ran up the dock-side.

WITHIN the space of a minute Agnew's property was neatly arranged upon the trolley floor. He himself occupied a seat of honor—a plaid which the Albanian unwound, in spite of protests, from his own waist and spread upon a trunk. Thrusting with their feet, two men to a side sent the wheels spinning down the track.

Where it debouched into the dusty square round which the main cluster of dwellings was arranged, a man, a burly Montenegrin, in a uniform of red and blue and leggings of white, stepped out across the track and held up his hand.

"The customs," explained Jovan politely and spoke a few crisp words. The other grinned, nodded, and drew back. The trolley proceeded sedately and with gathering speed.

"Are we free traders here?" asked Agnew, with some bewilderment. "It has not been my privilege to escape in other parts of Europe thus."

"His home is some six or eight kilometers up the line, signor," said the Albanian placidly. "When convenient we allow him the use of such of our trolleys as pass his door. He could scarcely offer you, in whose control the line now is, the indignity of question or search. I informed him of this."

Agnew smiled again. Freedom, who had beckoned to him so invitingly, on the other side of the Atlantic across the din of the

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town and the machine-shop, was surely here at his side. Here among the old peoples the open, unfettered life was his for the asking. And Work called. At his feet was the Road—the steel track which his hand was to fling across the wild uplands of the Bir in the face of every difficulty that nature, politics, human jealousy or his fellow man could bring against him.

He turned his survey upon the track. He looked up a moment or two later to find Jovan's glance meeting his. There was a question in the Albanian's eye.

Agnew smiled and nodded. "Not amiss," he commended. "Well bedded. The slope of the curves is excellent."

Jovan attempted to hide a gratification which he could not entirely conceal under an indifferent shrug.

"There was small room for error here, signor. An unvarying gradient, no obstacles, nothing to contend with save the wickedness and sloth that are the sole assets brought by many of these Italian reprobates across the Adriatic. But with tact—such as you and I, signor, can contrive with a pair of closed fists—they are amenable to reason. It is in the hills that we come to the real matter. The hills and the border-lands. There mere discipline, or even blows, are unavailing. We need a leader. Allah, the All Merciful, has deigned to send us one!"

There was amused deprecation in the lift of Agnew's brows.

"I am not influenced by flattery, my friend," he said, "and should not have expected a man of your appearance and race to speculate in the using of it."

"Flattery!" The white-clad arm was lifted in a gesture of repudiation. "Allah has given me eyes, signor, and I use them. We are strong men, we of the Bir, and ask for strong leading. I do not owe my position to my knowledge of road-craft; my work has been my teacher; I came to it a fool, yet with a fool's willingness. But I could show that strength lay in my hands and that my fellows gave me leadership."

He smiled, a grim, almost cruel smile, as he looked down upon a gang working at a culvert that pierced the low embankment across which they ran. "It is my desire that this road reach its appointed end with swiftness, signor. Am I one to spend myself in toil—I, Jovan Vaco of the Bir—for a handful of *kronen?* No! But the failing heart of my country needs a new artery. And these"—he pointed toward the toilers with contempt—"and these shall fulfil my purpose!"

AGNEW looked at him with some sense of bewilderment. Previous engineering experiences across the Balkans had proved that in these debatable lands the taint of political intrigue touches all things, even the humblest official. But that the contagion reached the very trackmen and ballast-punchers was a new conception. His interest in the Albanian grew, and warmed to suddenly impulsive admiration.

"You work for your country, then, you and these?" he asked, with a nod at the other white-clad figures.

"For what else, signor? We have fought for her with rifle and *hamdjar*. Now our weapons are the pick and spade. But it is a fight, nevertheless."

"With whom, and to what end?"

The other stretched out his hand toward the north.

"For liberty, signor! What else? In Bosnia, in Herzegovina, they have stabbed her to the heart. Here it is Allah's purpose that we snatch her from under their cruel, trampling feet."

"And they are——"

"Every man of German blood. Austria, signor, with Prussia at her back. Are we fallen to so little account already, we peoples of the Balkan Hills, that news of how they deal with us has failed to reach you across the seas?"

Agnew smiled. "It has been the talk of a million lips," he said. "But among my own people, though many read, few understand. I have been in the Balkans before."

The Albanian grinned fiercely. "By Allah's leave we will make the writing such that none can miss the meaning and the ink shall be red upon the page! We are one league, we in Albania, in Macedonia, in Montenegro—Slav and Bulgar, we are one in this!"

He thrust out his hand, and pointed along the gray vista of the ballast that was lost among the ravines. "And this is to be the link that binds us, signor! This is the weapon we wield. The Road—the Road!"

As if the passion within him needed an outlet of action he stretched out a hand and gripped the lever and ratchet that worked upon the front axle of the trolley. He swung it backward and forward, working

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furiously. The wheels responded; the men who ran, leaning upon the woodwork, raced forward with giant strides. They sped upward into the overshadowing hills.

CHAPTER VI

THE LURE

AS THE trolley emerged from the canyon on to an open hillside, half a dozen long wood-built huts were disclosed facing the track. From each came the roar of many voices and the muffled clatter of spoon and fork. A score of children sprawled curiously, and hungrily, about each doorway. Women flitted in and out and to and fro between the huts and a central building, bearing steaming plates of spaghetti or polenta and flagons of deep red wine.

The trolley halted. "Govac. The Number Two Depot, signor," explained Jovan. "The midday meal."

Agnew stood up, stretched himself, and stepped down upon the track. The Albanian lifted his fingers to his lips and whistled shrilly.

A man appeared suddenly at the door of one of the smaller buildings, a dark-complexioned man, of short but powerful stature, who hesitated, stared curiously, and then came forward, hat in hand. He bowed to Agnew with Southern grace but with a hint of obsequiousness that grated upon the Canadian's democratic instincts.

"Signor Carlo Gessi, in charge of this section," explained the Albanian shortly. He added a curt nod of recognition to the other's beaming smile.

"Am I privileged to be meeting our new chief?" said the man, in a deep, soft Italian voice.

Agnew held out his hand. "I have come to help you to the best of my ability, Signor Gessi," he said. "We are to be coworkers and, I hope, the best of friends."

The man's fingers closed upon his in an enthusiastic grip. "Signor, signor!" he murmured. "Believe me, we appreciate these condescensions from a cavalier such as yourself. A little wine now—a piece of bread? You will give me the infinite pleasure of serving you with the humblest of repasts?"

Agnew hesitated. He turned the tail of his eye inquiringly toward the Albanian. But Jovan was staring stolidly up the height that overhung the camp, and returned no answering glance of suggestion.

The Canadian bowed his acquiescence.

"A glass of wine—it would be a real refreshment after these miles of dust, signor. But my time is well paid for and I must use it for our mutual employers. I think I must, with infinite regret, refuse your invitation to dine."

Signor Gessi spread out his hands. "Your spirit is one to be revered, but the spirit is as the body makes it. I beg you take some little mouthful for your support—and for the honor of my house." He turned and shouted with raised voice. "Gaspare!"

Something emerged from the darkness of the hut behind them—something that crept forward with weary, halting steps. Agnew drew a deep breath of pitiful surprise.

A boy looked up in his face—a boy whose brown eyes were raised in a glance of shy admiration and—or was this imagination?—with entreaty. The child—his years could be scarcely sixteen—was a hunchback.

"The new Signor Intendente, Gaspare!" said the Italian. "Signor, my son."

Agnew grasped the fingers which quavered, alas! at a level little above that of his own knee. "And you are one of us, Gaspare?" he asked, smiling. "You work for—the Road?"

"Vicariously, signor—vicariously," interpolated his father. "His care for me limits his powers. He is my housekeeper."

The boy's eyes remained fixed on Agnew's face. "I cook and clean," he said slowly. "But I am not weak, signor. It seems to me that I could work—as men work."

He stooped with a swift clawing movement and closed his arms round a couple of beechwood sleepers that lay beside the track. He whirled them up shoulder-high.

"See, Signor Intendente!" he said.

A frown creased his father's brow. "It is sufficient to resemble the monkeys, little dolt!" he derided. "Do not imitate them!"

A slight sound came from Jovan's direction—the hiss of a breath sharply inhaled between half closed teeth. And then he moved away in the direction of the trolley. His back was studiously turned upon the Italian's face and regained smile.

"That is an uncommon feat of strength!" admired Agnew. "That would tax my own powers to the limit, Gaspare."

The dark, wizened face flushed. "But I am a poor walker, signor," he confessed

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with a sort of proud honesty. "I am lame, do you see? But I lift, yes, they can not say that weights are beyond me."

"Suppose that you exercise you talents in placing a flagon upon the table!" growled Gessi. "The signor has not come to a gymnastic display. This way, Excellency. Be pleased to avoid the lintel, which was built for other statures than your own. Cups, Gaspare—and spread a napkin!"

FOR a moment after his entrance the darkness prevented Agnew's taking in his surroundings. As his eyes accustomed themselves to the shadow he looked about him curiously.

The walls were of unplaned deal. The table was rough planking, roped to trestles. The chairs were frankly boxes, strengthened with slabs of timber. But every shaft of light that penetrated through the open door and the two windows was sucked up and doubled, as it seemed, by two full-length mirrors which faced each other from each end of the room. There was something more than startling about this—something that Agnew felt as an instinct, though his intelligence failed to give it a name. Later on he realized that it was disgust. A door opened, an inner door, leading from the living room to an apartment beyond. A woman's figure was silhouetted in the opening.

She came forward, slowly, silently, and with a curious poise as if of significance. She looked at Agnew with dark, liquid, untroubled eyes of brown.

It was a glorious face, a face filled with the perfections of tint and line that Sicily, or at infrequent intervals Capri, alone supplies. From the arch of her slippered instep to the wide whiteness of her brow she challenged Fate with that flawlessness which Fate—so tradition has it—must ever resent and strike at with jealous claws. Agnew, looking down, was filled with wonder, and an incredulity that was almost awe.

"My daughter," came the Italian's voice. There was covert triumph in the inflection. "You have seen the worst that chance has dealt to me; look now on the best," it seemed to say. "Lucia, the Signor Agnew, Intendente of our labors."

She bowed slowly, silently, receding from him as her body bent through a supple curve and straightened into erectness.

"Welcome, signor," she murmured. She looked at him, steadily, critically, without stirring, without further speech. There was, indeed, a queer, expectant hush in the hut as the two confronted each other, as if something anticipated but inevitable hung short of culmination. Agnew was sensitive to it, fought against it, struggled with a new and disquieting diffidence.

He spoke sharply and without reflection. "Your father must be felicitated in having your care in these outlandish wilds, signora," he said. "But housekeeping is no light task at this distance from—civilization?"

She smiled and into her musical voice came tones that implied nothing less than contempt. "I do not keep house," she answered.

"Indeed, such rough domesticity as we contrive is best managed by Gaspare," said Gessi. "We have learned to find his cooking even tolerable."

"On the other hand, womanly occupations must be far to seek here?" demurred Agnew. "You must read much, signora?"

She shook her head. "I do not read," she replied, monosyllabic as before.

"That is the present peril of her soul," deprecated Gessi, with a laugh. "Want of occupation. Our intellectual exercises are limited to discussions in which our prejudices clash without result. You can hardly conceive with what grateful hearts we welcome a visitor, signor."

Agnew stiffened. What was being hinted? His smile died.

"They are privileged who can take advantage of your exigencies," he said dryly. "I fear they are few in number, for my duty to our employer will force me to insist that all under my direction use their leisure for little more than the necessities of food and sleep."

"And your Excellency is so right!" agreed the Italian with vivacity. "Ah, the American energy! That is what this undertaking needs and now will get. We must spur ourselves to special efforts!"

"You remind me that I am preaching and failing in practise," said Agnew, holding out his hand. "A thousand thanks for your hospitality. Signora, at your service! Gaspare, another time we may discuss the use of your great powers on the Road. For the present, to our next meeting!"

He withdrew, hat in hand, facing toward them courteously till he reached the door. But of the three he was conscious of one only. He saw the exquisite face of Lucia

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Gessi turned toward his own with an expression that spoke of a certain indifference. But there was confidence, too, and arrogance. To these the future, perhaps, held the key.

As the trolley gathered speed and in the act of lifting his hat to wave his entertainer farewell, Agnew sighed deeply—an obvious sigh of relief. Jovan chose to treat the sound as a question. He turned and looked at his companion interrogatively.

"He keeps good wine, this Gessi," said Agnew. "You have tasted it?"

"I have tasted nothing—not even the air of that house," answered the Albanian quaintly. "I prefer it as the One God presents it to us all—untainted!"

CHAPTER VII

THRING EXPLAINS

AGNEW pushed aside his plate and searched his pocket for pipe and pouch. The meal Thring had offered him had been substantial but plain. One thing about it had surprised him. He had been offered no drink but water.

Thring, after eating little, had spoken not at all. He leaned back in his chair, sunk in a brown study. A young man of five-and-twenty had no right to possess such lines as seamed his forehead. Even three weeks' lonely superintendence of a great engineering enterprise should not have produced them. Agnew meant bluntly to ask reasons for them.

And then Thring raised his head. "Do you want a drink?" he asked slowly.

"I shouldn't object," said Agnew, with a smile.

Thring heaved himself up from his chair, walked deliberately across the earthen floor, and stooped over a rough chest. He brought his heavily booted foot down with tremendous force upon the lock, and broke it. Without comment he thrust his hand beneath the cover and produced a bottle of whisky.

"Say when," he said laconically.

"When!" said Agnew, as soon as the liquor rose a modest inch in height, and looked at his companion inquiringly.

"Lost the key?" he asked, eyeing the splintered case, and Thring shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"I threw it away," he answered. He stared at Agnew with a sort of sullen stolidity—even with a tinge of defiance.

Agnew nodded. "Not a thing to leave about, perhaps," he acquiesced.

"Don't think I suspected—my men!" cried the boy. "I didn't trust—myself."

Agnew kept silence. This was no time to force confidences.

"I don't drink—I never have been a drinking man," rapped out Thring. "But the last three weeks! My ——!"

Again Agnew nodded and again kept silence.

"Do you know what you are up against?" cried the other. "Do you know why Sanders went, as he did, like a hog, suffocated in its own wallow?"

Agnew started. "Eh?" he deprecated. "Sanders? He died—how?"

"Like a beast!" cried Thring. "First his mind died and then his body! Openly they could not reach him—Jovan and I saw to that. So they pulled him down with his own noose—he betrayed himself to them and their temptations!"

"They?" Agnew stood up. "What are you trying to tell me, Thring? They are—*who?*"

"The—the other side. Those who have set their hands and their hearts to the destruction of this Road and to the destruction of every soul concerned in its building. Names? What name can I give you but the one that covers all the villainy hatched between here and New York? And that means—nothing!"

"And is?" said Agnew. "And is—what?"

Thring shrugged his shoulders. "Call it what you like—Camorra, Mafia, Black Hand. Call it the devil and his fiends incarnated! They are the instruments, but the force behind them—that's the thing beyond our finding. Is it Austria? Perhaps. Is it the Campania Daregno, whose tender would have been accepted if Gresham had not jumped in and snatched it from under their very eyes? Is it Turkey, hating it because her bureaucrats hate everything that goes to disturb their reign of pillage and corruption? God knows. The pressure may come from a hundred points, but it's concentrated—here!"

AGNEW sat down again, and for a moment a queer silence ensued. Thring's hands quivered. His feet moved restlessly across the unswept floor.

"And Sanders?" said the Canadian at

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last. "Sanders understood this and endured it and sent no word to us?"

Thring laughed grimly.

"Sanders defied it!" he said. "Well, he's had his answer now. Their bullets did not reach him. But—he went!"

Agnew made a gesture, half impatient, half commanding.

"Give me the plain tale of it, Thring!" he said. "Let me know quite clearly where you and I, and the Road, stand."

Again Thring laughed—harshly, savagely.

"Where we stand?" he repeated. "We stand on the battlefield. On one side are you and I and Jovan and the men, the patriots of the Balkans, who have come to understand that this road is the link binding them all together in the fight for liberty. On the other are all those whom political ambition, personal greed, and villainy have brought together to crush us. In the open we are too strong for them—they have come to have a very wholesome fear of Albanian arms and an Albanian's aim. But in the dark? There's where they beat us. They stab—from behind!"

Agnew looked frankly incredulous.

"But if our own men are for us?" he objected. "If the Albanian workmen are on our side?"

"All the unskilled labor is with us. But what of the Italians—the tunnel-men, the skilled artizans, the engineering staff? They are the tools of the Black Hand! The Black Hand has sold its services to Austria—or whom you will. And now the Black Hand has us beaten to the ropes!"

"How?" cried Agnew. "How?"

"You'll see soon enough—to-morrow! They have Sanders's plans. And they had to take Sanders too—so they took him. And, without either, we are at a standstill!"

"But I have copies," said Agnew quietly. "And I am an engineer, Thring. So are you."

"Copies of his original plans?" asked the other. "Or copies of plans made within the last month?"

"The full original plans and specifications," said Agnew. "What is the matter with them?"

Thring threw out his hand with a hopeless gesture.

"I thought as much!" he cried. "They leave us where we are—beaten. They can't be carried out!"

Agnew laughed dryly. "And you are an American, Thring!" he said. The simple words brimmed with a scorn which was biting.

The boy nodded. "Yes," he agreed, "I am an American. I have lived my life in the light. I am used to clean work—to clean methods. How am I—how are you—to deal with those whose hearts and brains and hands are steeped in villainy; who maim, and laugh at the maiming; who murder, and exult over their dead; who serve devilry, and have learned every trick their master teaches, till their service is no service but a delight, for very devilry's sake? How do we deal with *them?*"

"With determination, with grit, with courage! Are you asking me to throw up my hands before your—specters?"

"Specters?" He shrugged his shoulders derisively. "Shall I tell you what happened no more than three days ago and within a hundred yards of where we sit? Did you notice the pool below the bridge here, the one where the river gushes out of the gorge and is flung away from the side of the embankment by a concrete spur? Jovan would have drowned a man there if I had not interfered."

"Jovan?" Agnew's eyes were bewildered. "Why?"

"Because when a sudden freshet came down from the hills it undercut that spur and proved that the block foundation on which it was supposed to rest didn't exist! Now both Jovan and I had seen it made and all but completed. It was built in the dry season behind piles."

"Yes. Then the concrete rested on——?"

"Gravel, mud, what you will. Only the facing stones had been left in place. The whole weight of the boulders behind them had been quietly withdrawn. It meant the wreck of the bridge—and of half a section, if it had happened in the rains."

Agnew nodded. "And Jovan?" he asked slowly. "He did—what?"

"He went to see the section gangsman. He had disappeared, but Jovan found him. There was no escape for the fellow—half a hundred other Albanians were within call. They flung the wretch into the pool and kept him there. Fortunately for him, I understand artificial respiration. I brought him round. And I only did it for Jovan's sake. Because if Esuli Bey, the Vali, had come to hear of it, we might have had to lose Jovan. That is only one incident in

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a hundred. It's a type that is growing monotonous."

FOR a moment Agnew made no comment. He sat staring at the opposite wall of the shanty, gnawing his mustache. His brows were knitted, but Thring failed to detect anything like apprehension or anxiety in his new chief's pose. His eyes were brightening—his blood grew hot within him. Opposition—danger—difficulty? The call rang clear over all. The Road! The Road!

"Sanders?" he asked again. "He went down—how? Drink?"

Thring raised his eyes and looked at Agnew through a moment's pause.

"Drink," he agreed laconically. "But devilry as well. You saw Gessi, coming up. Jovan told me. You saw—her."

"The daughter?"

Thring nodded. "She was the bait. She was the lure that dragged him to the mouth of hell and flung him in. That—that wanton!"

He moved restlessly on his stool. Then he flung back his head. "No," he said quickly. "She is not that. I'll be fair to her—she doesn't do it—knowingly. But *he* knows—her father! He knows that it is her eyes, her face, her lips that draw them to *his* feet. He knows—and spreads the net like a spider!"

Thring struck the table with a sudden petulant blow.

"We are in his hands—that is the truth of it! A common sectional engineer! He sits down there at Gorac and weaves his webs and is bought and buys his underlings, and the Road, the Great Bir Road, which is to be a highway for the nations, is at his mercy! We struggle and plan and he smiles at our efforts. The final word? That comes from him—from him alone!"

Agnew stood up. "No," he said quietly. "That isn't you speaking, Thring. That is loneliness, or depression and a mind and body overtaxed. The idea is unthinkable! One Italian rascal to work his will against a great American corporation, one knave against—us?"

Thring threw up his hand with a protesting gesture.

"One!" he cried. "Thousands, I tell you! Half a nation, the strength of all the villainy that stretches from the Alps to Sicily and across the seas to New York itself. The Black Hand! And there is against it—you and I!"

"And God and plain righteousness and the will of a people that refuse to cower to evil because it lurks and strikes from the dark!" Agnew's voice was fierce with sudden wrath. "I tell you if you and I and a thousand like us go down here, away from our own land but with its honor to be here upheld, a thousand and ten thousand more will crowd to follow in our steps! Thring, if what you say were true and all the specters which your solitary life has raised for you were not the ghosts I know them to be, would you have me falter? Would you falter yourself?"

Thring raised his eyes. Then he, too, stood up as if he cast from him a weight. "No!" he said. "No, Agnew. I'll see it through as—God pity him!—I think Sanders meant to see it through, till he was trapped." He hesitated. "You have seen the snare. You have seen—her."

"I saw Lucia Gessi—I have seen a thousand pretty women. As if they could draw me from duty—my duty to the Road!"

"The thousand, no," agreed Thring. "The one, that is another thing." He drew a deep breath. "No, Agnew," he said slowly. "I am a young man and you are my senior by half a dozen years. But don't despise your adversary. You have to face many things here—Gessi is the worst of them. And in Gessi's hand are many weapons, but Lucia has the keenest edge. I have seen it *stab!*"

Agnew drew out his tobacco-pouch. "Your proofs are yet to come," he said, "but supposing you give me them, what is to prevent my sending him about his business—he, his daughter and all the influences he is supposed to wield?"

THRING opened his lips, but at the sound of footsteps halting on the threshold stood silent and expectant. A knock stirred the rough paneling of the door.

"Enter!" cried Thring tersely.

The door opened. The figure of the Albanian stood revealed, his white clothing outlined upon the darkness. He saluted.

Something crackled sharply without—something, to Agnew's startled eyes, shone red across the background of night. Jovan gave a mighty leap into the room, sideways and to the left. But not before the crackle

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outside was answered by a similar sound on the wooden wall opposite the doorway. Thring flung back the door with a slam.

Jovan made an apologetic gesture. "I should have remembered, Excellencies, that a figure outlined against the light is a target that tempts. And a shorter man would have been hit. The bullet passed under my elbow as I raised it."

For a moment Agnew failed to grasp the full significance of what had happened. Some one had tried to kill this man who stood there so imperturbable? Monstrous! Absurd!

"What was it—what happened?" He made a step forward. "There has been an accident?" he hazarded.

"An accident, truly—for they missed," said the Albanian.

Agnew stared at him incredulously. "They shot—at *you?*" he cried.

Jovan smiled. "They took a chance which will not recur, signor. Small wonder that some one of the many who remember the weight of my arm sought to add to it—with lead. It is nothing, signor. Before I leave, Signor Thring will be good enough to extinguish the light. They fire only from a distance—these heroes! That was from the opposite slope."

He smiled half apologetically, as if too much had been made of a trivial incident. "I came to hear what orders your Excellency had for the morrow," he explained. "This has been my habit with Signor Thring. It has become a matter too well known, apparently."

"As conditions are, we will relinquish the custom till the discipline in this camp is restored," said Agnew. "Is this your common practise—to import your hill vendettas into a peaceful community who have had no training in your ways of blood?"

The Albanian laughed. "Vendetta? In Allah's name, signor, why should I bring the border creed away from the border lands? That bullet was sped by order. He whose hospitality you used at Gorac expressed his will and you saw—what you saw." He was still smiling, with the patient air of a teacher instructing a dullard child.

"Gessi? You accuse him of this? With what proof?"

"Experience, signor. We know—what we know, Signor Thring and I, and you shall not be ignorant long. As to the orders, signor? I await you in the morning—where?"

Agnew looked from the Albanian to his assistant and back again. Thring smiled, too—a smile that answered the other's meaningly.

"We spoke of proofs, did we not?" he asked. "Is there need to multiply them?"

Agnew sat down. He made a gesture that expressed bewilderment, protest, incredulity. He shook his head. "We will meet here in the morning," he said. "Here! And my first duty will be to learn."

The Albanian nodded. "As your Excellency wills. The lesson is a simple one. I have, then, your leave to go?"

Agnew made an affirmative gesture. Jovan looked apologetically at Thring.

There was a click and the flame of the lamp flicked out. The bolt was shot back, the hinges creaked, and, crouching low, the Albanian slipped into the night. A match sputtered. The first red flare of it discovered another smile, a caustic one, on Thring's otherwise imperturbable face.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BROKEN LINK

"I AM NO reader of maps," allowed Jovan deferentially, "but if the signor will entrust three hours of his valuable time to my guidance I can show him more than a thousand diagrams will teach."

He faced Agnew and Thring across the heads of a score of ballast workers who toiled stolidly and mechanically between the rails that ran past the engineer's hut and offices. The morning sunshine fell upon his bronzed features. His immaculate clothing stared white against the background of dun rock and arid cliff.

For a moment Agnew did not reply. His gaze was directed toward the farther bank of the little river among the boulders in the shadowed ravine. On the previous night he had noted it as a gracious break of color amid the desolation of his surroundings. And now? Flowers, grass and undergrowth were gone. A blackened and still smoking heap of ashes covered the slope!

The Albanian saw the direction of his glance. He drew out of hearing of the trackmen and lowered his voice.

"Indirectly, signor, the responsibility for that lies at my door. On my return last

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night I mentioned to my nephew Mirko, who works in my gang, that I believed the herbage harbored vermin. The lad has little to occupy him these days, owing to a twisted ankle which the surgeon desires him to rest. Yet he crawled—on hands and knees and so silently—across the ravine and set a match to the sedge, retiring immediately to the shadow of a boulder. The flames leaped up to a fine height and a fox fled before them. Mirko risked a shot at it. Was the Excellency by any chance disturbed?"

Agnew shook his head. "What luck had Mirko?" he asked.

"Little, signor. The fox yelled and showed a disposition for one thoughtless moment to stay and reason out the matter. But Mirko being behind a boulder in the shadow and he himself being in the open in the light of the flames, he betook himself hurriedly to his earth—carrying his rifle. He left some signs of blood on the stones."

For a moment Agnew was silent. The Albanian regarded him with a childlike expression of innocence in which, however, suppressed lights of humor twinkled.

"Mirko recognized him?"

"No, signor. Yet something tells me that in one of Signor Gessi's gangs a workman is lacking—or works stiffly, with a bandaged limb."

"That is easily ascertained."

"But, all the same, is a matter best left unprobed. What is a wounded trackman more or less?"

Agnew frowned. "The section that held him would need a new chief," he said grimly. "Signor Gessi would have to go, or stand his trial as accomplice to an act of attempted murder."

Jovan looked anxious. "Might we postpone consideration of the matter?" he asked. "The morning is clear, there is no wind. From the summit of Dobcen your Excellency will get an unparalleled view of the country which may be of the greatest use to your Excellency's plans."

Agnew beckoned him toward the hut. "You bring these accusations against Signor Gessi and yet you allow no act of his to be investigated. Explain yourself."

"Signor," said the Albanian quietly, "in the hills when we set snares for singing birds we tie a pinioned songster beside the nets. Here, when we desire to keep all evil elements under supervision, we close our net of observation round the evil which we know. To him come all the evil-doers we do *not* know, who thus introduce themselves to us. With Gessi gone, we spend time unprofitably in discovering his successor, who may be a ganger, a common laborer, a tunnel-worker, a section hand—nay, to all outward seeming no more than some canteen cook. Whereas now we are assured with whom it is that we have to deal and we lay our plans accordingly."

AGNEW looked at him meditatively. The matter-of-fact assurance in the Albanian's tone had for him a sense of irritation. This situation went beyond his experience. The Balkans he knew, or thought he knew, but here, if Jovan was to be believed, competing interests were clashing in notes deeper than any he had heard. The difficulties of an undertaking of this kind in a Sultan-ruled land were notorious, but these things that Jovan hinted were not the petty jealousies of corrupt officials. A bitter trade rival, a huge political predominance, and the great power of evil for evil's sake were arrayed against him. And the threads of all concentrated in one man's hands—Gessi's. Was this a thing credible? Unconsciously he shook his head.

"For the moment, signor," came the Albanian's voice, "this is not a matter of immediate consideration. May we postpone our proofs?"

Agnew wheeled toward him quickly.

"I wish to work in the open!" he cried with sudden petulance. "I am no lover of the dark."

"And yet, signor," demurred the other, "our Road, for the present, must run in the dark places of the earth." He turned and pointed significantly toward the overhanging crags. "When we emerge from those all will be plain. That I can easily prove to your Excellency, from higher ground. Here, shut in in these ravines, our sense of proportion is lost. Let us go and look on things—from above, signor."

He made a gesture toward the trolley that half a dozen workmen had rolled into view. "To every day its appointed task," he said persuasively. "To-day to see, to-morrow to act on what we have seen."

Agnew looked at Thring, whose answer was no more than a significant nod—toward the trolley. Agnew smiled, shrugged his shoulders, and took his seat.

"You have hinted that I have to steel

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myself against one controlling force in the formation of this road," he observed pessimistically to the Albanian as the trolley swept down the easy gradient that led into the shadows of the canyon. "The alternative appears to be abject subjection to another."

Jovan turned his head with the inquisitive, startled look of a wild creature surprised by what he fails to understand.

"Subjection? To what, signor?" he asked.

"Yourself," said Agnew laconically, and waved aside protestations with an imperative hand. "To-morrow I may free myself of your trammels," he added. "To-day I submit myself to them. Make the most of your opportunity. Forward!"

With a resigned gesture the Albanian offered no further defense. The trolley clattered into the sunless narrows of the defile.

And here Agnew could not but admire the deftness and capacity of his dead predecessor. Situations which had seemed in plan or diagram to have but one, and that the most obvious, solution, here proved to be compromises with difficulties that would have taxed the genius of men whose names were at the very summit of the profession. Imagination had seen and grasped what experience and technical knowledge might have passed by. Possibilities had been gauged, dealt with, were now embodied facts. The river had been tamed and harnessed. Agnew turned to his companion.

"I am not wanted!" he declared impulsively. "Your difficulties have been planned away!"

Thring chuckled and looked at Jovan. "We have two hundred miles of road in hand of which you have seen perhaps fifty," he said dryly. "There is yet a problem or two to be solved."

Agnew nodded. "But the man who built as this has been built"—he waved his hand about him—"has not left much to chance," he hazarded.

"About that you must form your own opinion," Thring said.

There was something restrained, something even a little ominous, in his tone. It appeared to Agnew as part and parcel of the atmosphere of mystery.

"Please speak out!" he said with sudden sharpness. "What is it?"

DARKNESS and the roar of echoes were about them as they plunged into a short tunnel. Thring's reply had to suffer a postponement. A minute later they rolled slowly out along a deep cleft in the cliff that overhung the river some twenty feet below. The trolley slowed up and halted.

On the far side of the stream was the mouth of another tunnel in the rock. But of a connecting bridge there appeared no sign. A stout cable, anchored to the rock at each end, stretched across the gulf, and on this a cradle ran for workers and material. A couple of men traveled over as he watched. He wheeled quickly toward Thring.

"The bridge? Why is it not completed?" he cried. "It is among his specifications of six months ago."

Thring led him forward a couple of paces. Bedded in the rock at his feet were the torn and twisted ends of steel girders.

"The bridge was there last November. It was a matter of little more than hours to build. The span is what you see—no central support was needed. We had only to prepare a bed for the girders and lower them into position. That is what remains of—our second attempt."

"The second?" Agnew's voice was harsh and scornful. "And why? Who was responsible?"

"Nature," said Thring quietly. "We built in September. It was an easy—a ridiculously easy job. And the material was good. I have seen half a hundred loaded trolleys pass over it scores of times. And then—the snow came."

He pointed up to where the thin line of blue sky hung outlined by the caging walls of stone. "On each side and a thousand feet up, the shoulder of a hill slopes away toward a summit. They are stone, these slopes, at an angle of sixty-five or less. By December they are ten feet deep in virgin snow. Nobody told us. Those who knew had not the intelligence. Those who had the intelligence had not the knowledge. Now do you understand?"

Agnew drew a deep breath. "Yes," he said slowly. "I understand. Avalanches—or perhaps avalanches and the river combined. No doubt, in this tapering bed, it leaps up a dozen feet in an hour?"

Thring nodded. "The first time, yes. Snow fell, or rather ice, for it had melted and frozen again. It blocked the channel. We

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blew away the block with dynamite. It blocked again, in the night. The water rose with incredible swiftness, burst the dam, and swept upon the bridge in a wave forty feet high. It crumbled as putty crumbles—there was not a sign left of it. Sanders attributed the block to an angle that struck out into the river bed fifty yards up-stream. We blew that down, got up other girders, and the trolley traffic ran as before. The river did not block again for weeks. Then came the great snow-storm of the year."

Agnew's face had taken on an expression of anxiety. He, too, was leaning forward and staring up the implacable face of stone. He turned, as Thring hesitated, and looked at him.

"You have seen," said Thring. "The river had no part in this destruction. The avalanche did it. A thousand tons of snow and ice roared over the edge above, smashing full on to the top of the bridge. It was smashed in as a hammer smashes—reduced to rubble, buried, ground to fragments that the river washed a hundred miles down its bed. A break in the Road. And where is the mend to come from—where?"

AGNEW stood silent, trying to take in the situation in detail. The huge fissure in the hills must be bridged or—what? A new route must be selected—five million dollars' worth of work already accomplished must be thrown away; perhaps five million more, for which no estimate had been made, must be spent. What did this mean to the contractors—to Mr. Gresham, who was trusting to him as he had trusted to his predecessor? Ruin, no less! Was there no way—could there be no alternative? Surely the protecting of a bridge sixty yards long offered no insuperable dilemma? He stared and stared again.

A mile to his right and something like two miles to his left the canyon stretched, narrow, a mere slit in the menacing hills, the pent waters gushing between the rocks in a thousand eddying waves and whirlpools. Above, the overhanging brink loomed pitiless, bathed now in the early Summer sun but ominous with beetling edges of what Winter snows would threaten. Through four long months of every year that hazard would hang above the bridge, a blow that might fall at any moment. His work would be a sort of inanimate Damocles beneath the mountain's impending sword. But there must be a way—of course there must!

He turned to Thring again. "Since the destruction of the bridge Sanders proceeded as before? He worked up to and from this point as usual?"

Thring nodded. "Yes," he said. "But he told us nothing. He had his plan—I know as surely as I know anything that he had it, but what was it? How could he go on forging a chain with that link broken—and to remain always broken—before his very eyes!"

"But you questioned him?" said Agnew impatiently. "You asked?"

"Yes," said Thring, "I asked. He laughed at me—laughed in my face!"

Agnew gnawed his lip. "But he never reported to his employer either!" he cried. "This was here, day after day, ruining his whole enterprise, and he said nothing to them! It—it was monstrous!"

Thring shook his head. "No, because he saw his way clear. He laughed at us, he laughed at all who came and argued the point with him. The local men, the Montenegrins, the Turks, German engineers who came spying—he laughed in their faces as he had laughed in mine! Oh, he had his notion cut and dried! But he said the time was not ripe, and went on building—and laughing. And he told no one—or, perhaps, only one."

"And she?" cried Agnew. Unconsciously he used the feminine pronoun because instinct had told him the answer before he even framed the question. "And she was——?"

Thring smiled grimly. "You know—you show you know," he answered. "Lucia Gessi—who else? And is she to go with that secret still in her possession? Is *her* father to be dismissed—to take those plans where he will?"

Agnew was silent. What answer was there but the one?

TO BE CONTINUED

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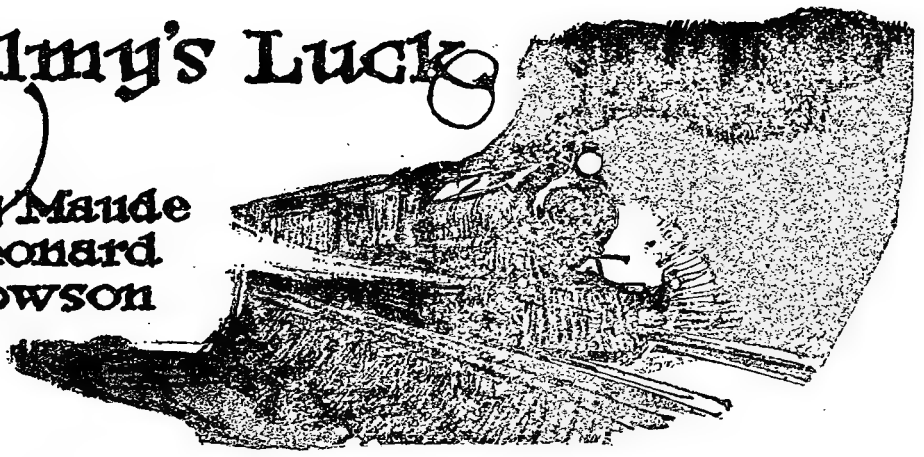
Almy's Luck

by Maude Leonard Towson



THERE was a steady, droning hum of the carwheels as the train sped along through the night over the wastes of southern Idaho. In the express car the three men gathered under the light in a corner were snatching a comfortable smoke.

Almy, the express messenger, was young, yet his thin, rather delicate face bore traces of strain and trouble.

"Do you suppose," he broke in suddenly, "that bad luck follows a fellow when it gets a good start? That you can't escape it?"

Ranger, the oldest man, cried out in elaborate protest. "Drop it, Almy!" he said gruffly. "Get over your nerves! What on earth could happen to you now? Nobody with sense blamed you for that mix-up over the delivery of those bonds!"

Almy gave a wry smile. "But they can't find the right person to blame and naturally that does not endear me to them in the least! If anything else goes wrong they will let me out on general principles as a Jonah—they won't want to see me around!"

"And you nearly got killed in that wreck on your first run," put in Smith, his assistant, with cheerful relish. Smith enjoyed other people's troubles.

Almy nodded as he watched the cigar smoke curling upward from his hand. "Why," he said reminiscently, "the first job I ever had as a mere boy nearly landed me in the 'pen' because the man who robbed the firm was almost smart enough to lay the blame on me! And next the firm failed and that threw me out. I tell you, things are bound to go wrong where I'm concerned! I never cared so much about it before, but it's different now. You see—there's a girl."

The other two nodded understandingly. "That changes things," Ranger agreed. He had been married recently.

There was a low roar as the train pulled over the bridge, and the three got up, for they were nearing Snake Junction. For a while Ranger and Almy and Smith were rushingly busy. Just as the wheels clutched the rails again Smith came in and threw down some packages. "Say," he broke out, "when will they drop on us next? The inspector is getting aboard—and it's the middle of the night!"

"Inspector!" echoed Almy blankly. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "Let him come! If he chooses to lose sleep keeping tab on us, that's his affair. He must be a new man trying to earn his money!"

"He is," Smith told him. As he spoke the individual in question entered, nodding at them in a curt, businesslike fashion. His eyes swept the car keenly.

"You are Almy?" he inquired as Smith busied himself fastening the door. He surveyed the boyish messenger a little grimly. In a few moments he was occupying himself with the books and papers Almy was getting out for him. The train had again settled down to its long, steady hum and beyond that it was very quiet in the car. Smith moved back to his seat in the corner alone, for Ranger had gone into the next car. So suddenly that neither Smith nor Almy was conscious of the motion two revolvers had been whipped from the inspector's pockets, one pointing at each of the startled victims.

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"Put up your books!" snapped the man with the weapons. "And get out that $60,000 package of money you have in the safe! I've got to drop off at Divide Bridge!"

Almy, gazing into the revolver-bore, whitened, but his pallor was not so much the result of fear as the sickening realization that once more fate had him in a malign grasp and this time would crush him irremediably. Without doubt he and Smith were cornered and helpless. His own revolver was across the car, out of reach, and Smith carried none. In the whirl of outraged feeling which enveloped him he doggedly shut his teeth on one resolve—if he died for it, and thus ended everything, the thief should not receive the package from his hands! Seemingly the pseudo-inspector read Almy's mind, for he smiled a trifle sardonically.

"You won't?" he asked with deadly pleasantness. "Still, on the whole, it isn't necessary, for I observe you left the safe door open when you got the books. I can help myself. Kindly stand over there against the wall with your arms out—*ah!*" His revolver covering Smith spoke spitefully, Smith having thought he saw a chance to reach Almy's gun. He dropped to the floor clutching his shoulder.

"I wouldn't stir if I were you," was the advice given Almy by the master of the situation. "It wouldn't do any good and you might get worse!" Still covering him, the "inspector" backed to the safe and with one hand rummaged till he found what he sought. Evidently he was familiar with the appearance of the package. Then he backed to the door, Almy following him with desperate, helpless eyes. Before him he saw vanishing his whole future, all hope of success and, beyond all, all hope of the girl he loved.

"Good-by!" the inspector called sarcastically as the train slowed down. "This is where I leave you!"

As his head dropped from view Almy with one spring was at his desk, clutching his revolver, and with another leap was at the door.

"Take charge!" he half-gasped to the groaning man on the floor. "I'm going to follow him!" He, too, disappeared into the darkness outside as Smith dragged himself painfully up, trying to reach the bell-rope.

ALMY, rolling and crashing down the embankment, had lost the power of coherent thought. He was merely a human machine with one idea—to lay hands on the man who had tricked him. The wild hazard of trying to cope single-handed with a desperate and skilled criminal in the faintly luminous darkness of the night had not dawned on him.

In the distance he could hear his train roaring away, but about him was utter silence. In the dim light of the stars the flat desert land with its blotches of sagebrush revealed itself spot by spot to his frowning gaze. Nothing moved. His clutch on his revolver was so tense that his fingers were numb. At the instant, a little beyond him, he was conscious of a motion and even as he turned his head and sank to the ground the man for whom he sought cursed madly.

"It can't be the Divide Bridge!" he cried impotently. "They're not here! It—it's a mistake!"

A glow spread over Almy. For once fate had given over the game into his own hands, unbelievable as it seemed. He blessed the miscalculation that had left the train-robber at his mercy, bereft of confederates and horses. The dark spot before him began to move uncertainly, but Almy did not hurry. All the time in the world was his, all the opportunity. He almost smiled as he thought that this time he would not disappoint those above him, and, above all, he would not disappoint the girl. Then very deliberately, his eyes more used to the starlight, his ears ringing in that vast, lonely quiet, Almy fired at the dark blotch.

WHEN finally the train pulled back to the little bridge, and the men with swinging lanterns and grim faces swung off they had a shock. Close to the track sat Almy. In one hand he clutched the package of money, in the other he still held his revolver. Below him was a huddled heap.

"I got him!" he said briefly.

It was Ranger who grabbed Almy. "You—you young fool!" he got out at last. "Don't ever talk of your bad luck again! You've the luck of one man in a thousand that you're alive this minute!"

"It's about time!" said Almy.

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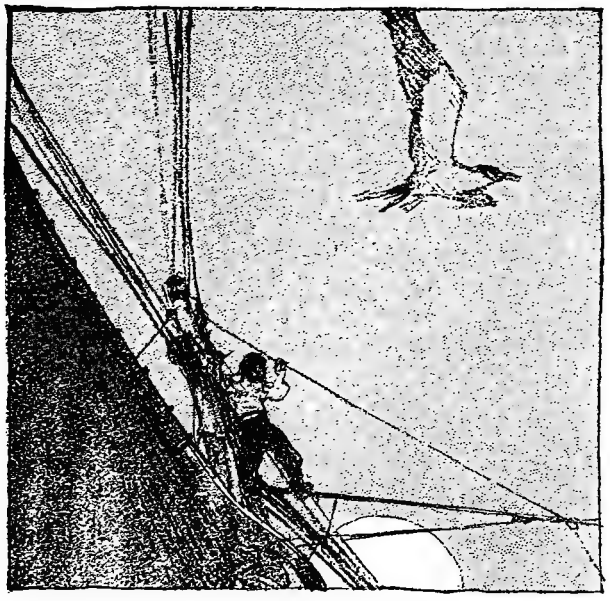

The Albatross

by William Hope Hodgson

"CONFOUND that brute!" I shouted in sheer desperation. Then I sang out to the 'prentice who was keeping "time" on the lee side of the poop, to bring me a piece of spun-yarn and a marlinspike.

I was first mate of the *Skylark*, full-rigged ship, and we were off the Horn on a cold, absolutely windless night. It was the twelve to four watch in the early morning, and four bells (two o'clock) had just gone.

All the watch there had been an enormous albatross flying round and round the vessel; sometimes he would actually fly across the decks, which is a thing I have never known to happen before.

When the boy brought the marlinspike and the yarn, I bent on about two fathoms of the latter, so that I had a sort of handy little harpoon. Then I slipped quickly up the mizzen rigging and out on to the cross-jack yard, where I waited with the spike ready in one hand and the end of the line held fast in the other.

Presently, away forward in the still night, I heard the dismal *squark* of the great bird, and immediately a spate of blasphemy from the man on the lookout, who was evidently getting as much bothered as I by the actions of the creature.

Not a sound then for maybe ten minutes; and then suddenly I saw something float between me and the dim sky-line and come inboard. I lost it for a moment; but immediately there came the loud, dismal *squark* out of the night to my left, and directly afterward I saw vaguely that something was passing under the yard. I raised the marlinspike and drove down at the thing with all my strength, letting the line fly out to its full length. There was a rustle of feathers and a tugging on the line, and the bird *squarked* twice. Then a jerk and the snap of something breaking, and the great albatross was gone free.

I hauled in on the spun-yarn until I had the marlinspike again in my hand; as I passed it between my fingers I felt that there was something caught round the butt, something that felt like a piece of rag. I loosed it from the spike. Then I went down again on to the poop, and at once to the light of the main binnacle, to see what it was that had got caught round the marlinspike.

I COULD not see the thing very plainly at first, and I took the lamp out of the holder, so as to have a better light. I found then that it was a strip of red silk, such as might be torn from a girl's blouse. At one end was a piece of broken tape. For some minutes I examined the thing very carefully. It was in this way that I found presently a single long

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hair, tangled in the knot of the tape. I picked it loose, gently, and looked at it; then I coiled it round and round my forefinger. It was a girl's hair, brown, with a glint of gold in it! What did it mean? We were off Cape Horn—one of the grim, lonely places of the ocean!

After a while I replaced the lamp in the binnacle and resumed my ordinary tramp of the weather-side of the poop. All the while I was turning this matter over in my brain, and presently I went back again to the light, so that I might have another look at the piece of silk. I saw then that it could not have been very long since it had been torn; for it was very little frayed at the tear and had no appearance of having been weather-worn for more than a few days. Also, the material was new and seemed to be of very fine quality. I grew more puzzled.

Of course it was possible that there was another sailing-ship within a hundred miles of us; it was also possible that such a vessel had a girl aboard, perhaps the captain's daughter; it was also possible that they had caught this particular albatross on a line and tied the silk to it and let it go again. But it was also exceedingly improbable. For sailors will always keep an albatross for the sake of the wing-bones, which make pipe-stems, and the webs, which make purses, and the breast, which makes a gorgeous fire-screen; while others prize the great bill and the beautiful wing-tips.

Moreover, even if the bird had been loosed, why had some one torn up a new silk garment, when a piece of old bunting would have done just as well? You can see how my thoughts were trending. That piece of silk and that long pretty hair coming to me suddenly out of the night in that lonely and desolate sea had stirred me with vague wonderings. Yet I never put my wonderments actually into words, but went back to my constant pacing fore and aft. And so, presently, the second mate came up at eight bells to relieve me.

The next day, through all the eight to twelve forenoon watch, I kept a pretty keen lookout for albatross, but the whole sea was lonely, and though there was such an absolute calm, there was not even a Mother Carey's chicken in sight—only everywhere, so far as the sight might reach, an everlasting gray desolation of water.

The afternoon watch I went below for a sleep. Then, in the first dog-watch, a little before three bells, I saw a great albatross swing and glide against the gray of the sky, about a mile astern. I reached for my glasses and had a good look. I saw the bird plainly, a huge, bony-shouldered albatross, with a queer bulge below the breast. As I stared at him, I grew suddenly excited, for I saw that the bulge was really a packet of some kind tied on to the creature, and there was something fluttering from it.

In the second dog-watch, I asked two of my 'prentices to come down with me into the sail-locker and help me root out an old seine-net that we carried for occasional sport. I told them I was going to have a try for the big albatross that night, if he started flying across the decks again, and they were nearly as keen as I, though I had asked them to do this sail-tossing in their watch below.

When my watch came, from eight until midnight, I did nothing until the "Old Man" had turned in for the night; then I had my boys rig lines for the big net from the main and the mizzen masts, so that we could hoist it up at any moment and let it hang like a curtain between the masts.

The night was very quiet and dark, and though it was difficult to see anything, it would have been easy to hear the bird at a great distance. Yet for over an hour after this there was no sign of anything, and I began to think that we were not to have a visit.

However, just after four bells had gone (ten o'clock) there came from far away over the sea the strange lonely *squark, squark* of an albatross, and a few minutes later I had a vague glimpse of him flying silently round and round the ship, in the way common enough with his kind. Presently he gave out a loud *squark* and turned inboard to fly over the poop. The next instant there was a loud *squarking* up in the night, and a constant beating of heavy wings. I shouted to the boys at the lines to lower away, and a moment later I was shining the binnacle light on a fluster of beating wings and tangled net.

I sang out to the nearest 'prentice to hold the lamp while I disentangled the albatross and found out what the package was that was made fast to him. The parcel was done up in layer after layer of oilskin, and from the outside there was another such streamer of red silk as the one that had caught on my spike the night before. Then

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I had come to the last of the wrappings of oilskin and there were a couple of pages torn from a log-book and folded very tight and compact. I opened them, and found that they were covered with hasty feminine handwriting. And this is what I read:

This is written aboard the *Unicorn*, derelict, on the twenty-first day of March, 1904. She was run down by an unknown steamer ten days ago. I am here alone, living in the chart-house. I have food and water sufficient to last me for about a week longer, if I am very careful. The vessel seems to be floating with her decks just a little above the water, and every time the sea is a bit rough it just pours aboard of her.

I am sending this message tied round the neck of an albatross. The Captain shot it the day before we were run down, and hurt the poor creature's wing. I told him he was an inhuman brute. I am sorry now, for he, along with every other soul, is dead, drowned. He was a brave man. The men crowded into the boats, and he stood with his revolver and tried to stop them, saying that no one should leave the ship before I was safe. He shot two of them, but the others threw him into the sea. They were mad. They took the boats and went away; and my maid went with them. But it was terribly rough, and I saw them sink just a little way from the ship.

I have been alone ever since, except for the albatross. I have nursed it, and now it seems as if it should be able to fly. I pray God that this message be found before it is too late! If any find it, come and save a girl from an awful and lonely death. The position of the ship is written down in the log-book here in the chart-house, so I will give it; then you will know where to search for me. It is Latitude 62° 7′ S. and Longitude 67° 10′ W.

I have sent other messages corked up in bottles; but this is the one in which I have all my hope. I shall tie a piece of something red to it, so that any one seeing my albatross will know it is carrying something and try to catch it. Come, come, come, as quickly as ever you can!

There are enormous numbers of rats about. I suppose the water has driven them up out of the holds and places; but they make me afraid to sleep. Remember, the food I have won't last more than a week, and I am here all alone. But I will be brave. Only don't give up searching for me. The wind has been blowing from the north ever since the night when the boats sank. It is quite calm now. Perhaps these things will help you to know where to look for me, as I can see that the wind must make the ship drift. Don't give me up! Remember I'm waiting, waiting, and trying to be brave.

MARY DORISWOLD.

You can imagine how I felt, when I had finished reading this paper. Our position that day was 58° S. and 67° 30′ W.; so that we were at least two hundred and fifty miles to the north of the place where the derelict had been eighteen days earlier; for it was now the twenty-ninth day of March. And there, somewhere away to the southward of us, a girl was dying of hunger and lonesomeness! And there was absolutely no sign of wind.

After a little while I told the boys to clear away the net and take the albatross down on to the main deck and tie it to one of the ring-bolts. Then I took a turn or two up and down the poop, and finally decided to go down and call the "Old Man" and set the matter before him.

When he had heard what I had to tell, he slipped into his clothes and came out into the saloon, where he read the letter twice, very carefully. Then he had a look at the barometer, and afterward came up with me on to the poop and had a look at the weather; but there were certainly no immediate signs of wind.

Through all the rest of the watch he walked up and down with me, discussing the thing, and went several times to the binnacle to make fresh examinations of the letter. Once I suggested the possibility of manning one of the life-boats and trying down to the southward, letting the ship follow on so soon as the wind came. But, of course, he would not listen to this, and very rightly, too. For not only would it have been to risk the lives of all who went in the boat, but to risk the vessel also, because we should have had to leave her undermanned. And so the only thing we could do was to pray for wind.

Down on the main deck I could hear presently the murmur of voices, and I knew that the men had got the news and were talking it over; but that was all that we could do.

At midnight, when the second mate came up to relieve me, he had already learned the story from the 'prentice who called him, and when finally I went below, he and the Skipper were still discussing it.

At four o'clock, when I was waked, my first inquiry was about the wind; but there was not a sign, and when I got on the poop I could see that the weather still had the same dead, settled look.

All that day we kept waiting for the wind that never came; and at last a deputation of the men came aft to ask to be allowed to volunteer to man one of the life-boats and make a search party. But the Master sent them forward again, quietly enough, and even took the trouble to point out the hopelessness of such an attempt, as well as the tremendous risk. For if the derelict were

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still above water, she might have drifted sufficiently far to be still lost after weeks of searching in the great unknown seas to the southward.

All that day the wind never came, and all that day there was nothing else talked about aboard except the chances of saving the girl. And when at last night came I do not believe half the watch below turned in, but paced the decks, whistling for wind and watching the weather.

The morning came, and still the calm; and at last I asked the Captain whether he would give me permission to take the little gig, which was a light and handy boat, and make the trial alone. I said that if I failed, and the boat was lost, her value would be amply covered by the wages due to me. But the "Old Man" simply refused to listen to the idea, and told me, kindly enough, that it was madness.

I saw that it was no use arguing with him, for he was perfectly right in what he said; but at the same time I was determined to try, if the wind did not come by the evening. For I could not get the thought of that lonely unknown girl out of my mind, and I kept remembering what she had said about the rats.

II

THAT night, when the Captain had gone below, I had a talk with the steward, and afterward I gave orders to get the little gig quietly into the water. I provisioned her thoroughly and added a bottle of brandy and a bottle of rum. The second mate fitted her with a boat's compass and binnacle from one of the life-boats, and also attended to the filling of the water-breakers, and saw that all the gear was in place. Then I added my oilskins, some rugs and canvas, and my sextant and chronometer and charts, and so forth. At the last I remembered my shotgun, and ran down for this and plenty of cartridges; for there was no saying how useful it might be.

I shook hands with the second mate, when I returned, and went down into the boat.

"We'll be after you as soon as the wind comes," he said quietly. "Good luck!"

I nodded, and afterward mentioned one or two details of ship's work which would need attention. Then I pulled in the painter and pushed off. As I cleared the side of the vessel, there came a hushed cheering, and hoarse whispers of, "Good luck, sir! Good luck, sir!"

The lamp in the little binnacle was lit, and I turned the hood round, so that I could watch the compass as I pulled. Then I settled down to my work at the oars, and presently the vessel had faded away from me into the night, though for a long while there would come over the sea to me the odd rustle and flap of a sail, as the ship lifted to the occasional glassy swell. But afterward I rowed on through an everlasting silence toward the south.

Twice in the night I ceased work, and ate and drank; then onward again, keeping to an easy, regular pull that I knew I could keep up hour after hour.

In the morning I had a good look round, but the *Skylark* was lost below the horizon astern, and the whole world seemed empty. It was a most extraordinary and depressing sensation. I had an early breakfast, and rowed on. Later, I got my longitude; at midday I took my altitude and found that I had done nearly fifty miles to the south.

All that day I pulled steadily, stopping only to eat and drink at regular intervals. That night I slept for six hours, from twelve until six, and when I waked there was still the everlasting calm.

Four more days and nights I went onward in this fashion. All the fourth day I pulled steadily, stopping every half-hour to take a look round; but there was always and only the gray emptiness of the sea. All that night I drifted; for I had passed over, and was now to the southward of, the position of the derelict given by the girl, and I dared not row in the darkness, for fear of passing the wreck.

Part of the night I used in making calculations, and afterward had a good long sleep. I was wakened in the dawn by the lapping of water against the boat, and found that a light breeze had sprung up from the west. This cheered me immensely, for I knew that now the *Skylark* would be able to follow, provided that the wind was not merely a local breeze. And, in any case, there was no longer need to use the oars, for I had a mast and sail in the boat.

I stepped the mast and hoisted the lug-sail; then I shipped the rudder and sat down to rest and steer. And it is impossible to express my gratitude; for my hands were raw with broken blisters, and I ached

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in all my body with the constant and weary labor at the oars.

All that day I ran to the southward, keeping a lookout; but never a sign was there of anything, so that an utter dismay began to come down on me. Yet I did not give up hoping. That night I made fresh calculations, with the result that next morning, as soon as I had hoisted the sail (for I had let the boat drift during the darkness), I altered my course a few degrees to the eastward. At noon I found that I was a hundred and twenty-seven miles to the south and forty-six miles to the east of the last known position of the *Unicorn*. If I sighted nothing by evening, I would make a long tack next day to the north, a few miles eastward of my downward run.

I ran on until the dusk came; and then, after a final long look round, I dropped my sail for the night and set the boat to ride by the painter to a couple of oars, as I had done on the previous nights of drifting.

I felt desperately disheartened, and began to realize more thoroughly my own position, over four hundred miles from the *Skylark* and in a latitude of hopeless and weary storms and utterly unfrequented by ships. Yet I fought this down and finally settled myself to sleep, well wrapped up in my rugs, for it was bitterly cold, though so fine.

IT WAS some time after midnight that something waked me, and I sat up in the darkness and looked about and listened. I could not imagine what had roused me, but I felt that I had heard something, though there was no sound in all the night, except the low blowing of the wind and the rippling of the water against the boat.

And then, suddenly, as I sat there harking, there came over the sea from the southward the desolate mournful blowing of a fog-horn. I stood up abruptly and threw all my rugs from me into the bottom of the boat.

I ran down in the direction of the fog-horn, and in ten minutes or so I saw against the sky the spars of a big four-masted vessel. I dropped the sail and shipped the oars. As I pulled toward her, the sound of the horn broke out into the night in a dull roar, coming from the after-part of the vessel. I backed the boat aft, noticing as I did so that the vessel stood no more than three or four feet above the level of the sea.

Then, as I came opposite to the place where the horn seemed to be, I saw dimly that the deck rose here, and that I was come opposite to the poop. I rested on my oars.

"Miss Doriswold!" I shouted. "Miss Doriswold!"

The fog-horn gave a short, impotent blare, and immediately a girl's voice called:

"Who is that? Who is that?" in a queer, frightened, breathless way.

"It's all right!" I shouted back. "We got your message! I'm the mate of the *Skylark*, the ship that got the message. I'm coming aboard."

The answer astonished me.

"Don't come on to the ship!" the voice called back to me, shrill and anxious. "Keep the boat away! Keep the boat away! There are thousands of rats——"

It broke off abruptly, and there was the sound of a pistol-shot up in the darkness. At that, I had the painter fast in a moment and, catching up my gun, vaulted aboard. In an instant the girl's voice came again:

"I'm all right. Don't come aboard, whatever you do! It's the rats! Wait for the daylight!"

Even before she spoke, I was aware of a sound along the poop like the harsh noise of several saws at work. I walked aft a few steps, groping, and knew suddenly that there was a faint, curious smell everywhere about me in the night. I paused and stared through the darkness.

"Where are you?" I shouted, and then I saw the black bulk of the chart-house vaguely through the darkness. I went forward a pace, and stumbled clumsily over a deck ring-bolt. "Where are you?" I shouted again. "I've come aboard."

"Go back! Go back! Go back!" called the girl's voice shrilly, with a note of utter fear and horror in it. "Get into the boat, *quick!* I'll explain. Go back! Go back!"

III

THERE came to me in the same moment a strange sense of restlessness all about the decks, and then, suddenly, all the air seemed to be full of an odd whining noise, that rose into a horrible shrill, twittering keening of sound. I heard a massed sound, as of thousands of small scuttering bodies coming toward me at a run through the darkness. The voice of the girl came in the same instant, crying out

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something in a frightened voice. But I never heard what she said, for something plucked my trousers, and immediately hundreds of creatures sprang upon me and swarmed over me, biting and tearing. My gun was utterly useless, and in an instant I knew that if I would save my life I must go overboard. I made a mad, staggering run to the side of the derelict, the rats flocking about me. With my free hand I was tearing their great bodies from me and keeping them from my face. The hideous little brutes were so thick upon me that I was loaded with them. I reached the rail and got over somehow, and fell souse down into the icy cold water.

I stayed under water deliberately, as long as I could; and the rats left me and went to the surface to breathe. I swam hard until my head felt as if it would burst; then I came up, and found that I was clear of the rats. I discovered that I still had my gun in my left hand, and I was careful not to lose it. I swam forward until I was opposite the boat. I heard the girl's voice calling something to me, but the water in my ears prevented me from hearing what it was.

"Are you safe? Are you safe? Where are you?" the girl was calling.

"I'm all right, thanks!" I shouted back. "I'm in the boat. I'll wait till daylight, if you're sure you are safe."

She assured me that she was all right, now that I had come, and could easily hold out until the morning. In the meanwhile I had stripped off my wet things and got into the spares I had brought with me and for which I was very thankful now, as you can imagine. All the time, as I changed, the girl and I kept up a conversation. I asked her about food; she told me she had eaten nothing for three days and nights but had still some water, and I was not to try to reach her until daylight came to show me the position of everything.

This, however, would not satisfy me, and as I completed my dressing a sudden thought came to me. I struck a match and lit the binnacle-lamp and also the boat's lantern, which was in the midship locker. Then I hooked the ring of the lantern over the spike of the boat-hook and reached the lantern up on to the poop of the derelict, where I set it on the deck. I could see the chart-house plainly now, and a pale but very beautiful face was looking at me through the glass of one of the ports. It was Miss Doriswold, and I waved to her with the boat-hook. She opened the port about an inch and called out to know what I was going to do. I told her she would see very quickly. Then I stuck the boat-hook into the handle of the binnacle-lamp and ran to the other end of the boat, where I was able to set it inboard on the poop deck, some way farther aft than the boat-lamp.

I got the bottom boards of the boat now and set them across from gunnel to gunnel of the boat, and then, taking my gun and a pocket full of cartridges, I stood on this temporary erection and looked aboard.

I saw a most extraordinary sight, and really a very horrible one; for in the light of the lamps the *decks were literally black and moving with rats*, and the shining of their eyes in the lights made a constant, myriad twinkling from a thousand places at once, as the rats shifted this way and that. All about the base of the house there seemed to be rats, and I could see dimly that they had been at the wood-work of the house, but as there was a steel combing in at the back of the teak, very few had been able to get in, and then only by the door, as I learned afterward.

I glanced at the port, but Miss Doriswold was not there, and as I looked there came the flare of a match and immediately the sharp report of a pistol-shot. In a minute she returned to the port and cast out a big rat, which was instantly set upon by hundreds of others in a great black scramble. Then I raised my gun so that it was just a little above the level of the poop-deck and fired both barrels into that struggling crowd of little monsters. Several rolled over and died, and over a dozen ran about wounded and squealing, but in a moment both the wounded and the dead were covered with the living rats and literally torn to pieces.

I reloaded quickly and began now to fire shot after shot among the hideous little brutes, and with every thud of the gun they lay dying and dead over the deck, and every time the living rats would leap on to the dead and wounded and destroy them, devouring them practically alive.

In ten minutes I had killed hundreds, and within the next half hour I must have destroyed a thousand, to make a rough guess. The gun was almost red-hot in my hands. The dead began now to lie about the decks; for most of the rats were destroyed and the living rats had begun to run into hiding. I

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waved to Miss Doriswold, and we began to talk, while the gun was cooling.

She told me she had been fighting the brutes off for the last four days, but that she had burned all her candles and had been forced to stay in the dark, only striking a match now and again (of which she had several boxes left) when the sounds at the door told her that a rat had nearly gnawed his way through. Then she would fire the Captain's revolver at the brute, block the hole up with coal, and sit quiet in the dark, waiting for the next. Sometimes the rats got through in other places, above the steel combing. In this way she had been badly bitten several times, but had always managed to kill the rats and block the holes.

PRESENTLY, when the gun was cool again, I began to shoot systematically at every rat in sight, so that soon I had killed and driven the little monsters clear off the visible parts of the poop-deck. I jumped aboard then, and walked round the house, with the boat-lantern and my gun. In this way I surprised and shot a score of rats that were hiding in the shadows, and after that there was not a rat to be seen anywhere.

"They're gone!" I shouted to Miss Doriswold, and in the same moment I heard her unlocking the chart-house door, and she came out on to the deck. She looked dreadfully haggard and seemed a little uncertain on her feet, but even thus I could see how pretty she was.

"Oh!" she said, and staggered and gripped the corner of the chart-house. She tried to say something further, but I thought she was going to fall and caught her arm to lead her back into the house.

"No!" she whispered breathlessly. "Not in there!" And I helped her to the seat on the side of the skylight. Then I ran to the boat for brandy, water and food, and presently I saw the life begin to come back into her. She told me later that she had not slept for four nights. And once she tried to thank me, but she was dumb that way—only her eyes said all the rest.

Afterward, I got her to the boat, and when I had seen her safe and comfortable, I left her there and walked the poop of the derelict until daylight. And she, now that she felt safe, slept through the whole night and far into the daylight.

When she waked I helped her aboard again and she insisted on preparing our breakfast. There was a fireplace in the chart-house, and coal, and I broke up the front of one of the hen-coops for kindling-wood. Soon we were drinking hot coffee and eating sea-biscuit and tinned meat. Then we went out on deck to walk up and down and talk. In this way she learned my side of the story, and questioned me closely on every point.

"Oh," she said at last, holding out both hands to me, "may God bless you!" I took her hands and looked at her with the strangest mixture of awkwardness and happiness. Then she slipped her hands from me and we went again to our constant pacing. Presently I had to send her to rest, though she would not at first, because she felt too happy to sit still; but afterward she was glad to be quiet.

Through four days and nights we waited for the *Skylark*. The days we had entirely together; the nights she slept in the chart-house, and I in the little alleyway, with just a few feet below me the roll and gurgle of the water going through the waterlogged cabins of the half-sunk vessel. Odd whiles I would rise and see that the lamp was burning brightly in the rigging, so that the *Skylark* would not pass us in the darkness.

On the morning of the fourth day, after we had made our breakfast happily together, we went out for our usual walk of the poop. The wind still continued light, but there were heavy clouds to the northward, which made me very anxious. Then, suddenly, Miss Doriswold cried out that she saw the ship, and in the same moment I saw her, too. We turned and looked at each other. Yet it was not all happiness that was in us. There was a half-questioning in the girl's eyes, and abruptly I held out my arms, and she came into them with a glad little crying.

Two hours later we were safely aboard the *Skylark*, under only the main lower-topsail, and the wind coming down out of the north like thunder. To leeward the lonesome derelict was lost in huge clouds of spray and Miss Doriswold and I looked out in silence.

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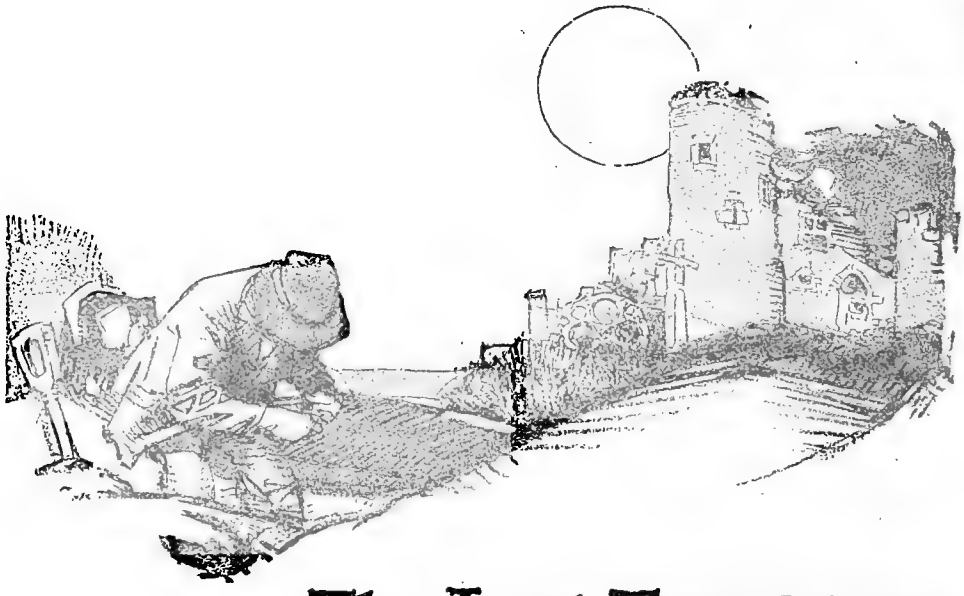

The Lost Treasures of EUROPE

by Buffington Phillips

Gold and Jewels still waiting to be found by some modern ADVENTURER

ONLY five years ago this Christmas two peasants in the district of Padonolaf, Russia, recovered a treasure of seven million dollars after fifteen minutes' search. It being a holiday and they being free from labor, they sat before the fire after their dinner and fell to talking of staple topics, one being the old tale in that region that in a stony cave was a vast hoard of gold, jewels, plate and so forth, hidden by some barbaric lord in the wild days that are lost to history. No one knew of any stony cave, but one of the peasants opined that a certain old quarry that had been abandoned for hundreds of years might possibly be the spot. Since the pair of them were idling, why not go look at it?

On arrival at the quarry they soon found a recess blocked with earth and stone and, pulling this away with their hands, came upon ancient iron-bound casks by the dozen piled within. Some of these had rotted open and showed the treasure running out.

Great Britain and the Continent are so thickly dotted with localities in which treasures are reported to lie, treasures offering an equal or better chance of recovery, that when for my own guidance in the preparation of this article I began marking each of them with a cross on a map of Europe I found the marks, in some sections, were so many and so close that they blurred each other. In this article will be set forth the greater portion of the more interesting of these.

Foremost and by all odds the greatest treasure-story of the world is the famous Rouvier quest, which has often stirred all France and remains to-day the prime mystery of all history. I hope, however, to add a strong hint that may be of aid in the next furor of search.

Louis the Pious was an abstemious and un-

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profligate man and had absolute control of the coffers of France in one of her richest periods. He had so much money that he did not know what to do with it other than lavish it on churches and sacred works. His greatest gift was the set of gigantic statues of the Twelve Apostles placed in Sainte Chapelle. To avoid public condemnation it was given out that they were merely gilded, but the private archives of the crown and the archives of the church show abundantly that they were of solid gold. Even a conservative estimate of their value makes a staggering figure.

Generation after generation passed away and still the great golden saints stood in Sainte Chapelle, classed among the art wonders of the world. Then came dark days for royalty in France. Rebellious mobs were sacking other churches and the high dignitaries called some noted royalist gentlemen into council. It was decided to remove and hide the statues. This was done with complete secrecy. The rising wave rolled higher and nobility and clergy were wiped out or dispersed. The guillotine or exile claimed them. When quiet came again twelve gilded wooden figures were placed in Sainte Chapelle and there they stand to-day. There was no announcement of the loss of the huge bulk of gold; there could be no announcement, considering the previous deception.

At last, some forty years ago, an imperial recorder, nosing around in the Tower of London cataloging rummage there, came across a small casket hidden away in a corner among a lot of stuff captured by the Duke of Wellington after Waterloo and brought by his commissaries to England.

The casket was secured by twelve seals and one of these the imperial recorder recognized as that of the Marquis de Rouvier then at the French Embassy to the Court of St. James. The young Marquis said that the other seals were those of great families in France prior to the Revolution but that many had been wiped out in the Reign of Terror. Securing permission, he took the casket and its custodians to France, assembled the heads of any of the families with a living representative and the seals were broken. Within was found the true history of the golden saints' figures written out in detail, signed by the archbishops and by the twelve royalist noblemen. The document stated that the twelve statues had been interred by workmen who were ignorant of their character in a spot in France "where the lines of latitude and longitude cross."

THE SEARCH FOR THE ROUVIER TREASURE

THE British Government transferred the casket to the Louvre and the whole affair was put on an official basis. The young Marquis and his friends of the other families joined in an association sworn to return the golden figures and fulfill the obligations of their grandfathers and great grandfathers. The young Marquis and two of his friends journeyed to the district near Neuilly and by the aid of scientific instruments located the crossing of the lines of latitude and longitude in a great open field. To their surprise they discovered that the field belonged to an estate that was one of the former properties of the Marquises de Rouvier. A peasant was plowing in the field and the searching party noticed that he and his predecessors had left in the center an oval spot now grown up with trees and brush. As there was no pile of stones there, no marsh, the young Marquis said to him;

"Why do you leave that spot of fine ground uncultivated?"

"Because, sir, my father and grandfather both bade me never to plow over or disturb that spot as long as I held this land and to so instruct my sons or those who should come after me, because in that soil there is a great holiness."

The joy of the searching party can be imagined. There was no question in their minds but that they had found the chosen hiding-place with very little effort. Arrangements were at once made with the proper authorities to begin excavation, and a force of picked men and guards was assembled. To the terror of the peasants, the trees and undergrowth were cut away and the first layer of soil removed. When the excavation had reached the depth of three feet the experts with the party announced that they were working in soil which had never been disturbed since it was deposited there by nature, but the Marquis de Rouvier insisted that the excavation continue.

It was sent down to a depth of twenty feet and broadened in all directions for a large area. But wherever spade was struck even the untrained eye could see that the strata had never been touched by instrument of man. It lay as it had lain since

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paleozoic times. At last, when funds were gone and the hole was an enormous affair, a law was passed forbidding further operations in that locality.

Since that time the papers found in the casket and the privy letters and documents in the hands of the dignitaries of the church have been gone over and over. It is certain that the treasure never was recovered, and it is certain that it was buried at a point where the twelve Royalist gentlemen believed the lines of latitude and longitude crossed. The most puzzling feature of the mystery had been the tradition of the peasants to keep that one particular spot from being disturbed. At the present time the great Rouvier quest is at a standstill.

However, the hint promised in a foregoing paragraph may give new life to the search. In going over some old records recently I found that there was considerable confusion arising out of a mixture of meridians, and that at the time of the burial of the treasure some observations in France were taken by the meridian of Greenwich and others by the abandoned meridian of Paris, while it is barely possible that the observations were made by the old meridian of Rome. It is impossible to take the time and space here to figure out the number of other points where main lines of latitude and longitude would cross in territory that was then strictly French. By one rough calculation I find that one of these would be in the province of Lorraine, now German territory, and oddly enough formerly the property of the brother of the Marquis de Rouvier.

NAPOLEON'S BURIED HOARD

JUST such a speculation as this resulted in the recovery of another of a great French treasure. The exact facts are not now obtainable, for the French Government has impounded all the papers and records pertaining to the same, and the incident, so far as it is concerned, is closed. The loose tale is that previous to the battle of Waterloo, Napoleon Bonaparte, at the request of some intimate friend who had a premonition of disaster, took a great quantity of treasure and buried it in the garden of the Tuilleries, marking it down by counting a certain number of elms from the end of a great row that stood in the enclosure. When time brought the Bonaparte family the opportunity of recovering the treasure, they could not find it, and all of the private searches that were made resulted in the disclosure of not so much as a sou.

At one time, after the Franco-Prussian war, some gardeners at work in the park dug a ditch and were working late in the gloom, one Winter day, laying some pipes. The surplus soil was taken away in barrels, and in the pile the morning light showed the corner of a leaden casket and some scattered gold-pieces. Immediately the entire trench was opened up once more, but the remainder of the casket could not be found, though far more extensive excavations were conducted.

Again the treasure was forgotten, and then a newspaper writer chanced to mention in a New York paper that the cutting down of some of the elms in the row to make a new roadway during the Second Republic might have thrown the searchers off in their calculations. The suggestion was reprinted in a French weekly paper and shortly thereafter the Government built a barrier around a section of the Tuilleries Park, a large force of sappers was put to work, and after about two weeks' time the work was abandoned, while the word went forth that the great treasure had been found.

KING STANISLAS, during the famous siege of Nancy, believing one time that the city was to fall, buried a treasure that comprised both the royal wealth and the combined wealth of the citizens of the town. He chose a spot outside the city but so close to the gate that the diggers could not be seen by the besieging army, his theory being that when the enemy came to loot the town they would not expect to find its treasures anywhere but within the walls. The royal unfortunate had no opportunity of recovering the treasure and the entire matter was neglected for three hundred years.

Only very slight efforts have been made to find it. The site of the gate has become a matter of some uncertainty, but from such plans and descriptions as I have been able to find it seems to me that a little careful search would enable some intelligent investigator to reconstruct the line of the city's wall, pick out the proper gate and, deducing from the contour of the enemies' trenches, figure out just where King Stanislas' treasure lies.

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THE LOST TREASURES OF THE POPES

DURING the reign of Innocent VII, when the Popes were alienated from Rome and established in the great château at Avignon in southern France there were numbers of free companies or mercenaries roaming the northern portions of that country, and some of them penetrated to the southern districts. Readers of "Sir John Hawkwood" in this magazine will remember one of these bands of free companions, the White Company, the same that figure in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's romance bearing their name, and may even recall a reference to the incident about to be set forth here. In the year 1367 one of these bands, undoubtedly the White Company, appeared in the valleys to the north of the château and moved in the direction of the affrighted Papal court.

It had been the fixed policy of the Popes during their stay at Avignon to keep a large store of gold and convertible valuables on hand, looking to an emergency such as might be presented to them at any time. One night, when the fires of the advancing band of marauders could be seen from the tops of the towers, the Pope directed two of his secretaries and the captain of his guard to detail a body of men and inter the hoard in some safe spot outside the walls. This was done, and with the dawn the castle was surrounded by the bands of the free company.

It was over three years, according to the papal records, before it was deemed wise to dig up the hidden wealth and bring it within the walls, and then, to the consternation of the Pope and his court, it could not be found! When the return of the Holy See to Rome was effected, the treasure was left behind, and there it remains to-day.

Not long since I talked with Colonel Perigord, of the French engineers, and he said that he had walked around the battlements of the château one entire afternoon, ten years ago, and surveyed the surrounding country carefully. To his practised technical eye, there was but one spot within the range of his vision that was at all likely as a place for the concealment of valuables, and that was in a little grove of very ancient trees within bowshot of the main entrance to the castle.

THE GOLD AND JEWELS OF ST. BAVON

THERE has lived one man in France who has surpassed all others in his interest and effort in the search for buried and sunken treasures, and that was M. Du Casse. Night and day, over a period of some thirty years, he followed the mad pursuit and though he found much gold he spent it all in the search of others, dying poor, but content with the wonderfully interesting life that he had lived. His cousin, known as M. Ormond, though he had a number of other names at various times, due to the peculiar life he led, was a man of inferior intellectual equipment, compared to the great master-searcher. But M. Ormond inherited the records and notes of Du Casse and the bulk of them are now in the hands of Ormond's heirs, a family living in the French portion of Quebec, Canada.

Among the most interesting of these records is the story of the little known trove in the ruined Abbey of St. Bavon, in Ghent. In 1758, a French Jew, by the name of Broisel, fled from Guadeloupe, in the West Indies, to Amsterdam, taking with him a large quantity of gold, jewels and plate, which he had obtained in the West Indies by some illicit means, just what the records do not show. His peculiar conduct caused him to be questioned as a spy and, being a cowardly sort of man, he fled to Ghent, taking with him a big, black West Indian negro, who accompanied him as a man-servant. The night of his arrival he left the inn in which he had quartered himself, he and the negro, bearing each a large sack of gold and jewels. It is known that they hid these somewhere in the ruined portion of the abbey.

The next day Broisel was rearrested as a spy and was deported. A wealthy man of Ghent protected the negro and made plans to return the unfortunate black to his home in the islands of the Caribbean. The ship on which Broisel was placed was one crossing to Hull, and on board were a number of ruffians who, finding that Broisel was a Jew, maltreated him so severely that he died. On being informed of his death, the negro told his benefactor of the existence of the trove and of its burial in the ruins.

With a party of peasants the two went there in daylight and the negro tried to point out where his late master had hidden the sacks. He was unable to do so, owing to

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his first visits having been made in the dark, and to his superstitious fears having obscured the accuracy of his perceptions. Further search was terminated by the Abbé, who scoffed at the whole proposition and forbade any more digging. This injunction was made permanent and while it is reasonably certain that any man who succeeds in getting permission to go through the ruins of St. Bavon will unearth enough wealth to buy a score of such estates, no one has yet made the attempt.

MANY TREASURES AWAITING A FINDER

IT IS impossible in this consideration to enter into details concerning some two or three hundred other treasures on the Continent and only a few of the more interesting can be mentioned and that very briefly.

Somewhere in the morasses in the hinterland of Vierlande, the queer little lowland tract above Hamburg, there is concealed in a tanked barge a great store of gold ornaments, jewels and gold-pieces hidden by the Lowlanders fleeing before the Spaniards in the sixteenth century.

Close to where the railroad running to Palermo from Messina pierces the mountain behind Messina there is a cave in which the early Sicilian patriots stored a big sum of money with a view to using it against their conquerors, the French, in the fourteenth century. During the long wait the knowledge of the secret was lost and one of the grand rules of the Alta Mafia is to allow no search for it, the saying being current that there will come a time when Sicilian freedom will need that trove.

Off Ischia, in the harbor of Naples, two great Roman barges laden with golden vessels, jewels and spoils were sunk 208 B. C. Extremely rich recoveries have been made in several of the interior Italian lakes. Genseric the Vandal took five shiploads of treasure to Carthage and concealed it in underground vaults which have never been found. Professor Yerdle estimates this treasure as worth a half billion dollars to-day. Alaric the Goth cached much treasure on the line of his advance and fully half of it was never exhumed. Any careful student who will work out the records might well deduce the exact spot.

The most enticing of the ancient quests is the one concerning which there has been so much speculation and on which no work whatsoever has been done. In the years before his death Attila the Hun became acquisitive and assembled a treasure so vast as to stagger the imagination. This he hid in a cave in Hungary not far from the spot where he died. All the traditions say that he was buried at the mouth of the narrow tunnel leading to the cave, for he believed he would come to life again and would need the treasure to regain his power. Who will do the necessary delving among the old records and locate the grave of Attila and the enormous wealth concealed near it?

In conclusion let me cite a great mass of sunken wealth concerning the location and existence of which there is no speculation whatsoever. In the harbor of Vigo, Spain, lay forty galleons, one fair day some centuries ago, many of them freshly arrived from Mexico and South America, several known to have several million dollars each in gold and silver bars, dust and coin aboard, and others, destined for other ports, that had put into Vigo to escape the common enemy, the English sea-rovers. Admiral Sir Francis Drake appeared and gave battle. Now a Frenchman or Spaniard would have had a keen eye to the treasure, but Drake did not, for he sank everything in sight.

On the bottom of the harbor, the greatest depth of which is sixty fathoms, these rich old hulks lie awaiting delivery of their wealth. Cavalier de Pina of Genoa has invented a circular steel tower which could be sunk over them and then floated with an observation chamber from which grappling-hooks and shovels could be directed, but his project is at a standstill. Before beginning this series, in order to get some understanding of conditions surrounding sunken treasure I discussed this situation in Vigo Bay with a superintendent of a large American wrecking company. He looked over the chart of the harbor and his hard blue eyes shone as he said:

"I wish somebody would sic me on that job! It is a cinch for us Americans—a holy cinch!"

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The House in the Deep Shadow

A "Gray Ghost" Story

by Muriel A. Pollexfen

THE day, fine till the dusk deepened, had developed into a drizzling night, chill with an incipient easterly wind and the bitter threatening of coming snow—a dull gray moonless night with a heavy sky of shifting blackness hanging low down like a canopy of mourning drapery, the thin drizzle damping the uneven paving-stones of the narrow side-paths with a greasy moisture and clogging the atmosphere with its penetrating wet.

From the doorway of a mean tenement in a squalid warren the ill-clad, shadowy figure of a man, gaunt and ghost-like, slipped into the halo of feeble yellowness shed by an oil lamp from the fanlight above the door and disappeared into the surrounding blackness with the sliding swiftness of a night-bird.

Then past rows and rows and streets of the same mean, squalid, sordid filthy tenements, so horrible, so exactly like the one he had just quitted as to be almost indistinguishable; past towering, dark, mysterious factories and warehouses and endless stores; past countless gin-houses blazing with lights and discordant with cries and the maudlin shouts of drunken laughter and threatening curses; past countless beings, homeless, wandering hither and thither in the cold and rain searching for shelter for the midnight hours; and at last to the river floating black and oily and noiseless under the moonless sky, the great bridges spanning it in the distance like a giant hand reaching from bank to bank, the dark bulk of a coaling steamer rising like a wart, a string of laden, deep-lying barges, a succession of formless shapes pulling against the ebbing tide.

The man went as though afraid of his own shadow, afraid of something, afraid of being seen and hindered, keeping close in to the protecting walls and slinking continuously from patch to patch where the darkness was blackest; shying from the street lamps, uneasy and vigilant until the town was behind him and only the deserted wharfs and the long, long stretch of river frontage, naked of habitation and enveloped in an inky pall, led from him to a far distance where the red and glimmering sky-sign from a distillery up-river winked like a glowing star in the colossal magnitude of lightless space.

An hour passed slowly, dragged away in long unending moments of increasing anx-

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iety. The man still lurked in the shadows, clinging to them with dogged persistency, crouching low, running low, slipping along with swift, unsounding footsteps when the chance of a clear road offered; crawling stomach to earth when, once, a second shadow dogged him for a space. And always his eyes were wide open, alert, darting from side to side as he ran, seeking, seeking, searching everywhere for something, for some one!

Another hour gone, and then a third passed and a thicker darkness clothed the earth, and the man still crawled, still ran, still searched. Then came the hour before midnight and he was the only being abroad on the path beside the river. Yet still he moved secretly in the shadows and still he sought eagerly, untired, undefeated, relentless, overlooking nothing, prying into every nook and cranny, hunting along the bank, scouring the flats, prodding the low-lying wastes, going backward and forward and over and over the same ground with a patience like that of a starving wolf searching the snow-fields for long desired food.

Till, suddenly, more than three miles from the lodging he had left, he came upon a narrow, obscure alleyway dividing a derelict cement factory from a second building—apparently a deserted house and built round with a high, dilapidated bill-board. The alleyway ran between the two buildings and led out on to the vast wastes of water-logged marsh-land that stretched away to Dartford. It was a narrow, unpaved cutting over ankle-deep in slime and oozing mud and blocked continuously with heaps of refuse. On one side rose the steep, brick walls of the factory and on the other the wooden boarding hiding the house.

The man had come upon the alleyway unexpectedly. From the rough road one might pass it in the darkness a hundred times without observing it—the brick wall and the wooden boarding wrapped its narrow, noisome mouth in impenetrable shadow. But the man was a starving wolf and the trail became suddenly strong in his dilating nostrils! He slipped into the black passage, a shadow among shadows, invisible among the muck-heaps, part of the boarding, a thing of the mud and slime, invisible to the keenest watcher's eye.

The passage was long, running the entire length of the factory site. The man traversed it once, on the boarding side, his searching eyes scouring the wooden planks, his fingers searching for a door, an ingress of any sort, the sign that an ingress had been made at any time within the past few hours. There was none. The boards offered nothing—no weakness, no admission, nothing. Bleeding and strangely weak, he turned back and crept with the same stealthy surety along the right side of the entry, this time feeling and searching for the way in along the towering wall of brick that girdled the cement-works, and still with the same gluttony of purpose, still with the same savage thoroughness.

And at last he found what he sought!

A TINY door, low down in the wall, blocked apparently by a refuse-heap, disused for years, rendered formidable by a huge padlock fitted through two thick staples driven into door and wall! But it was a door, and the man uttered a queer little guttural cry of triumph as he realized it. A door! Did it lead to—what?

His fingers, shaking now as with a palsy, hovered to the iron padlock and tried it. Again the guttural cry broke through his throat, again the trail smelled fresh and strong in his nostrils and he felt that his long hunger was to be satiated at last! Within the next hour! Within the next two hours, perhaps . . . but at last! At last! For the key had been turned in the lock and the padlock was but a dummy security! Some one had stepped across that heap of refuse within the last few hours! Some one had unlocked the door and either passed *in* or *out!*

Some one! Who was it? Ostermann? Who but Ostermann!

The door creaked beneath his push and jerked inwards and he stepped over the heap into the yard beyond. Across the yard the works rose into the sky, shapeless and yet defined, part of the building towering into the heights with a splendor lent by the generous darkness of the night and the remainder lying squat and undignified as though partly sunk into the earth and partly dispelled from it. This latter portion of the buildings had a flat roof and from one gable-end a giant crane leaned over, swinging out over the yard with a kind of insolent boast of passive strength. From the crane a chain still hung and, reaching lower than the chain, almost

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within arm's reach, a thick, white rope ran parallel.

The man shot out his arm and touched it. It was a new rope! He felt the raw rasp of it with a frenzy of joy surging up in him. Who but the man he sought could have had use for a crane and a new rope? Almost blind with the fever of his lust, he tried the rope, pulling on it weightily, testing it with his whole body clear of the ground. It held and he wasted no more time. There might be a dozen easier ways of getting into the deserted factory but here was a ladder thrust by fate into his hand and he hesitated not to use it.

Like a long black shadowy cat he swarmed it, keeping clear of the chain lest it swing from his body and clank a warning through the stillness; heedless of the deep and bleeding cuts eating into his flesh with every move; conscious only of his delirious triumph at each inch gained! Till at last the top! A flat, wide roof, bulwarked in by a narrow coping of ventilated blocks, studded freely with pipes and chimneys and storm-wrecked cowls—here a broken glass sky-light, there the half dismantled winch and platform which had once based the crane.

And across the first roof, reclining like a mass of indistinguishable cloud, gray and bulging, was something that made the searcher's eyes fill with sudden flame.

He crept rapidly over the roof on tip-toe, never showing himself for an instant, crawling as far as he could in the shelter of the coping. Till at last he came to it—was on the same roof—was within a yard of it—till he stretched out a quivering, shaking hand and let his fingers touch its bulging, rivet-studded sides!

Gray Ghost! Gray Ghost, and he was touching her, caressing her, longing to belong to her once again, rejoicing in her glorious beauty as she lay in the darkness, longing to have the power to set her wings beating and her motors throbbing and feel her soar up into that world of cloud and night above him!

Shivering, he crept from bow to stern, searching her deck, peering into her dark interior to find her master, or a sign of him. But for the moment the airship was alone and unguarded and a great temptation swept into the man's soul to steal her, to gratify his desire to feel her motors throb as his fingers pressed the buttons and swayed the levers. It would be a revenge almost as sweet as seeing death gather and glaze in Ostermann's eyes! Almost, but not quite! No, no, not quite!

Even as he decided he caught a wink of light moving in the uncovered window of the building opposite and his eyes became fixed on the spot.

He remembered the house behind the boarding and wondered whether it had proved a better lodging for the airship's owner than the rat-ridden cement works. Ah! Perhaps that narrow gallery bridging the space between them connected the works and the house! So that was it? The crew of the airship and Ostermann had made their quarters in the empty house and stored the disabled ship on the cement-work's roof!

Doubtless they were all in that house now. Some sleeping, some watching, some—— Even as he conjectured, a figure, two figures, glided past him and disappeared into *Gray Ghost.* The night watch?

It was in his mind to dash down the connecting gallery and hunt out Ostermann within the next few moments, but on second thoughts he realized that Ostermann would not be alone probably and that to seek to attack him single-handed would be but to throw himself into his enemy's power.

As he had come, so he vanished again, speeding down the alleyway and across the marshes till he reached the outskirts of a town.

With insane impatience he telephoned to Algy Brett.

"Its me—Hafner," he called, excitement twanging his voice. "I've got 'im! Meet me in the lane by the gas-works just outside Dartford. How soon can yer be there?"

II

IT WAS barely one o'clock when Algy Brett's huge car swung round the gas-works below Dartford and slowed down to a stop as the tires gritted on a cinder road and the figure of Silas Hafner stepped from the hiding-place of an empty shed and hastened to meet it.

"Ye've done it in pretty slick time, sir!" he said admiringly to Brett. "I wasn't expectin' yer till half-past or so. Who are those men? Tecs?" he added sharply and suddenly as he caught sight of two muffled figures in the tonneau. "Who are they?"

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"I couldn't do a thing like this alone. I had to bring some one, so I brought Schlesinger—he wanted to come. He's a fine chap, Hafner, so don't buck at him."

"An' the other, eh? Who's 'e? Another of 'em?"

Brett's voice sank lower as he replied and a wave of vexation passed over his face.

"The other fellow is Mr. Sterrith. He was with me when your message came through and no power on earth would prevent his fastening himself on to us and coming too! What he thinks he's out for I don't know, considering he professes to scorn the idea that there really is such a man as Ostermann or such a wonder-ship as *Gray Ghost!* However, here he is and here he'll have to stay. Perhaps, after all, it will make him wake up a bit, eh? The worst of it is I suppose we'll have to keep an eye on him, being the Prime Minister. Now, are you ready?"

"Aw, I'm ready! Keep to the right as far as the cinder path goes and then to the left—sharp round. I'll tell yer when."

"Where are you taking us to, my man?" It was Sterrith's voice speaking in Hafner's ear and betraying quivering, restrained nervousness in every note of it. He was leaning over the back of the driving-seat, peering into the newcomer's face to see what manner of man it was to whom he was trusting his very life. Hafner realized his fears in an instant and there was a grim humor in his words as he flung the reply back over his shoulder!

"I'm taking yer to Skittle Alley, sir," he said and laughed at his own joke.

Schlesinger spoke no word to any one. He lay back in his seat with closed eyes and folded arms and no one but Brett realized that behind his stern, set face a mighty brain was alert and ready.

The instant the last sign of habitation was behind them, Hafner had the car stopped and, springing out, put out every lamp. And in darkness they hummed along the ill-made roads, a black, rapidly moving mass, until at some distance from the entrance to the alley they stopped again and Hafner whispered that their journey was at an end—at least *that* part of it!

Schlesinger and Brett shook off their rugs and jumped out to survey the land. A lane leading away to the right offered safe shelter for the car and they backed it down the slope, leaving everything in readiness lest later occurrences should demand a hurried flight.

John Sterrith shuddered suddenly as he stood up. It was as though a premonition of coming evil came to him like a warning in the chill air floating over the marshes. He turned, shivering and nervous, to Brett, but he and Schlesinger were already following Hafner as he led the way forward into the pall of night beyond the lane. There was no choice but to follow reluctantly and he almost ran to catch up with them though they had not gone twenty paces and had no idea of leaving him.

"Wait for me . . . wait for me!" he panted, clutching at Brett's sleeve.

They went in twos. Hafner and the detective, Algy and the Prime Minister, and kept to the order until the mouth of the alleyway opened out on their right and Hafner hissed a warning through his teeth as he shot into it. He had described to Brett and Schlesinger on the road the position of the two buildings and the connecting gallery. The detective had given it as his opinion that to go over the same ground covered previously by Hafner would be sheer waste of precious time, as the chance of four men getting past the watchmen on the airship in safety was very slight and so they had decided to gain the entry to Ostermann's hiding-place in the house behind the boarding through the house itself. Therefore no word was spoken as, led by Hafner, they picked their way through the slime and mud, seeking intently for a way in.

THEN one of them discovered a rotten plank and, pulling it from its socket, they squeezed through the narrow opening into the space beyond.

The house stood high and desolate and the wall of boardings compassed it about as though guarding its silence and its secrets from the eyes of a prying world. The windows void of glass, decayed by rains, shattered by storms, stared blindly down at the men in the garden like the sunken sockets in a skull; the pale gray Mansard roof sloping upwards was the fleshless forehead, the stacks of the Georgian chimneys, bulging from the façade, were the skeleton bones of the death's-head cheeks!

Again the warning, the presentiment, breathed itself into John Sterrith's soul and again he hurried after the others.

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"Wait for me! Wait for me!" he whined and crawled after them at their heels.

Brett and Schlesinger were for the moment ahead. Hafner was like a dog in a leash, straining to be free, eager to meet the quarry. His face was gray with excitement and his eyes flecked with red; his lips thrusting and working in convulsive emotion. Brett and Schlesinger by sheer force of will kept him controlled and he walked at their elbows obedient for the moment but almost insane with the lust to kill.

Schlesinger grew nervous of him toward the end of the crossing of the ground between them and the house and kept looking at him over his shoulder. When they came up under the ground-floor windows he whispered to Brett to order Hafner to remain outside.

"He's mad! God knows what may happen!" he said earnestly. "Tell him to stop outside."

But Algy shook his head.

"No use. Not a bit. He's only mad to get Ostermann, and no power on earth will keep him off. No good trying. Besides, Ostermann is game we must have a ferret for, and Hafner is twenty ferrets in one! Come on round to the back. Mind how you step; the place is strewn with rubbish."

A sodden pathway ran round the house from back to front and above the pathway at the rear of the house the covered viaduct connecting it with the works showed like a bar sinister against the sky. Immediately beneath, obscure in the line of blacker shadow thrown by the gallery above, five steps led to a shattered door and by the light of Algy's pocket-torch they could see within the door a flight of stairs leading upward. Hastily it was decided that Hafner and Brett should follow those stairs and that Schlesinger and Sterrith should go round to the front of the house and tap the trap from there.

The stairs were rotten with decay and ill-repair and the rats had gnawed wide crevices between the steps, so that they swayed and creaked as Algy and Hafner climbed them in spite of their stockinged feet and minute care. Hafner crawled up them with an unsheathed knife clenched in his yellow teeth and Brett's revolver butting from his pocket, ready at an instant's warning. On every step they waited, listening, not daring to breathe, straining at every sound, imagining footsteps on the landing above them, imagining footsteps climbing the stairs behind them. Once a shrill whistle echoed faintly in the stillness and Hafner gripped his knife in lean, claw-like fingers and snarled suddenly as he waited for the attack. But none came and as the whistle sounded again they realized it was the signal of an engine as it approached the level crossing in the road more than a mile away!

Then the landing above was reached and the ascent of the next flight of stairs commenced and was half accomplished, only half accomplished when something happened. *Somewhere up in the top of the house a door opened—and closed!*

Had the person who had opened and shut that door merely gone in to the room and closed the door after him? *Or was he coming down?*

If he came down he would discover them crouching on the stairs! Hafner snarled again as the knowledge came to him and, disregarding Brett's restraining hand, climbed the remaining stairs with stealthy swiftness and reached the floor of the landing. Algy stayed where he was, cowering in the shadows, waiting for the challenge that did not come after all. Evidently the man in the room above had heard nothing and was unsuspicious! With a sigh of relief for the respite, he sat up warily and made his way silently to the landing where Hafner waited for him.

"He's not on this floor—he's up on the next. I've looked into those rooms—*Sh!* Listen. D'ye hear footsteps overhead? Listen!"

THEY were quite plain—the footsteps of a heavy man walking to and fro in a room above; pacing the floor, evidently, by the regularity with which a loose board creaked when trodden on.

Hafner's old look of hate-hunger was upon him and the lust for murder was crimson in his wild eyes. The conviction that the man who paced the floor above him was Ostermann filled him with delirious eagerness and recklessness. That it was Ostermann who walked backward and forward over that creaking board! Ostermann caught like a rat in a trap! And by him, by him, Hafner! If it had not been

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for Brett's restraint of him he would then and there have rushed up the stairs, burst open that closed door and take his chance of finding Ostermann alone. But Algy, in moments of extreme and dangerous importance, had a habit of commanding and obtaining obedience even from the most rebellious. It was so now with Hafner. The man was insane with the desire for vengeance, but Brett's grip on his arm conveyed an order to his excited brain which he found himself compelled to obey.

"Better get up to the next landing at once. Follow me."

The flight of stairs was a long one and it took five slow minutes to ascent them, but at last they reached the top and Brett's pocket-torch flashed out for a moment while he took in the plan of the landing. It was square with a low recess where a cupboard had once been, and four doors, two on either side, marked the rooms. It was from the room on the right that the sound of footsteps came, and the recess where the cupboard had been was directly facing it. It was not till they were crouching in the recess that Brett used the light again. This time he observed a fifth door, low down in the wall—a man would have to stoop to pass through it—and built into the space at the top of the stairs. The very peculiarity of its position gave him the clue to what it was. It was the door of the connecting passage between the house and the works!

That they had discovered the field of battle, the very center of the campaign, was sure! The Napoleon of the air was behind the door on the right; his men were beyond the gallery to which the door above the stairs led! Would it be possible to cut off the men and trap the master? He flashed the torch again across the gallery door and his heart leaped as he saw that the key was in the lock and that a heavy bolt was fixed immediately below the handle. It could be done in an instant! It meant only turning the key and ramming the bolt home and Ostermann would have to meet them single-handed!

Turning to Hafner, he communicated his plan in a hurried whisper.

"We need only wait for the other two!" he said, at last a trace of exitement sounding in his hushed voice. "The moment they come I will fasten the door and then rush the room opposite! I wish they'd come!"

Even as he spoke he heard them on the stairs and, turning the light toward them, watched Schlesinger's head rise above the bannisters side by side with John Sterrith's pale and flabby face.

III

THEY were all four of them crouched ready to spring forward and break down the door of the room where Ostermann was still pacing up and down, when the sudden sound of a voice speaking fell upon their listening ears and startled them.

So, after all, Ostermann was not alone? He had some one with him? Who?

Disregarding Hafner's impatience at the delay, they bent forward, ears at a crack in the panel, listening.

Ostermann was speaking and at the sound of his voice Hafner quivered and strained at Schlesinger's forbidding hand.

"Have patience a moment!" Algy breathed. "He can't escape and we may learn something——" He broke off, eager to hear every word that was uttered by the invisible men separated from him only by a door.

The pacing ceased for a moment and a fist thumped heavily on a table.

"How did we fail, Kellerman? How in the—— name did we fail?"

A roar of baffled rage filled Ostermann's voice and again the clenched fist struck the table. "How did we fail?" he thundered.

"I can not think, sir," came the answer. "It was no treachery—that I'll swear!"

"Treachery! By ——! If it was! If any of my men are found to be guilty they'll suffer for it! They'll suffer for it, Kellerman! Treachery!"

"No, no, sir, I'll take my oath they are true to a man! It was no treachery—no leakage. Unless that young Darien fellow managed to warn them. But how was that possible? It wasn't. He was drugged from the instant he came aboard the airship to the moment he was sent back to earth again."

The speaker's voice was grim, remorseless, not a vestige of feeling betrayed in a single brutal word. The fact that he was recalling a murder in which he had probably helped had not lent even a weakening to a syllable. He was of iron.

Ostermann resumed his impatient strid-

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ings and his words fell hesitatingly when he spoke after a long silence.

"The boy had time to write a warning during the time he was left alone in the lazarette. I wonder if he did? What a fool I was not to have allowed for such a contingency! Fool! Fool! Everything lost for the sake of a dramatic *coup!* If I had been content with throwing Darien overboard immediately instead of keeping him till I knew Sir Dean Densham would be there to realize the warning of my action! But it's no good crying over spilt milk now, I suppose! And it has taught us one thing, Kellerman, at least, and that is that the sooner that old fool Densham and that young idiot of a nephew of his are taken for a little cruise in *Gray Ghost* the better for us and our plans, eh?"

"I quite agree with you, sir. If you had taken my advice before, you would have captured young Brett the moment you heard of the affair of the battleships. I don't know why you didn't!"

"I refrained because I underestimated his cleverness and overestimated my own! There now—you have a bitter confession! The knowledge of my mistake has been like gall and wormwood on my tongue ever since I forced myself to realize it! But take my word for it, it's an error not likely to happen again, my friend! Not at all likely! No, no, Master Algy Brett, your little flutter of triumph is ended and you are going to be called upon to pay the bill in a very short space of time indeed!"

"And not a moment too soon, sir! The devil's in that boy—and he's more dangerous still, now that he's got Schlesinger running double with him! I only hope they have not informed themselves about our little *coup* of—well of two hours from now, eh?"

"That's impossible, Kellerman! None but one of our own men—indeed *none but you yourself* could betray that which will happen between this and dawn! *And you, I take it, are incorruptible?*"

IT SOUNDED through the door as though Ostermann were commanding of his satellite an answer on oath. And the man called Kellerman gave it.

"In the name of God I swear I'm true, sir!" he almost whispered, and there was a note in Ostermann's voice when he next spoke that told of relief from a sudden suspicion.

"Good! And now tell me how the thing goes. Well? You've sent Sells and Filder?"

"Yes, sir, I sent them an hour ago. I followed your instructions implicitly. War will be sprung upon England before the clocks strike eight! The mines are all laid, thirteen of them—unlucky number for the English, eh?—and within the next few minutes or so I expect Sells and Filder to ring us up and announce that every communication is complete and that the whole thirteen are controlled by this little instrument here! You are a genius, sir, and I humbly worship you as such, but I think I must also claim a crumb of honor for *my* invention also! May I, without desiring to detract a jot from the admiration I feel for you, sir? Just a crumb of self-praise for a little square box adorned with a lever six inches long and a coil of wire?"

"You may, Kellerman, for your little box there through which you can control and fire thirteen mines without even running the risk of getting your whiskers singed! Pish! May you indeed! My dear Kellerman, if it had not been for your little box I should have had to send the fleet back and the transports back and disgrace myself with the Emperor as the result of the failure of my 'seeds of destruction'! As it is, we can gain the same end with your thirteen mines and your little box as I expected to do with my 'seeds' and by breakfast-time London will be in flames and ruins and our soldiers will be swarming over England! Ah! What's that? The telephone—answer it! It must be Sells or Filder."

The listeners without the door heard Kellerman conversing with the speaker at the 'phone and then repeating to Ostermann:

"Its Filder, sir. The mines are all connected and everything in working order. The connection with the mine at Sheerness delayed them—it proved difficult but is perfectly in order now. He and Sells are returning to *Gray Ghost* immediately. They are at Dartford now. They speak of seeing a dark motor-car running with all lights out in this direction and think you ought to be warned. Think there's anything in it, sir? Brett? Schlesinger? For heaven's sake, sir, don't let us risk anything!"

"No, no! But I can't believe they could trace us here! Still, as you say, no risks!

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By ——! if we fail this time—if they balk us now, I'll murder them! I'll treat them as I treated Darien! I'll—— Ring off, Kellerman! Tell Filder to come back at once, and ring off. And listen to me! The fleet of our finest battleships, our most formidable armored cruisers and protected cruisers, and every torpedo boat we can spare is within hailing distance of England—within an hour's steaming. Go back to *Gray Ghost* and call them up by the wireless. Tell them that something has threatened which makes it expedient for us to act sooner than was arranged. Tell them to steam ahead slowly—and to wait! Tell them we are going to act at once! *At once!* By the time they are ready to land their forces, our work will be done and London will be a blazing wilderness! Understand? Then go, and return here to me so soon as you have delivered your message and are satisfied that Von Hardtten understands. I want no bungling this time! See to it! Hurry back and set yonder little box working! The sooner the better. Go."

Kellerman replied that he fully understood his instructions and that he would return with all speed to force back the lever of the little box which possessed the power of firing from such a colossal distance the thirteen mines distributed in London's most vital parts.

Then he opened the door, stepped out into the darkness of the square landing, shut the door carefully behind him—and then choked silently as a massive hand shut over his mouth and a grip of steel squeezed the life from his throat!

He was stone dead in three minutes and filled the recess opposite Ostermann's room.

Schlesinger ran quick fingers through the man's pockets and found his pocket-case. Ripping it open and pressing the button of his electric torch, he satisfied himself it contained the thing he sought—a thin, flimsy slip of paper with thirteen names on it. The names of the spots where Ostermann had laid the mines which were to deliver England to the wolves!

Brett sucked his breath in with a little hiss of satisfaction as Schlesinger whispered the discovery to him.

"Good!" he whispered in reply. "If we can only keep Ostermann from touching the box they speak of, even if he escapes us we can now pick them up and destroy them! And now, what?'

"And now for Ostermann himself! Hafner, if you love your life, keep quiet! Mr. Sterrith, if you would rather stay out here, do so!"

But Sterrith shook his head and kept close to Schlesinger's elbow. It would be better to die in company than to be murdered alone and unprotected in the dark landing.

Then Schlesinger rose up silently and the sound of his knuckles tapping for admission on Ostermann's door echoed dully in the ears of the men awaiting the answer to the knock.

It came without an instant's delay. It was the commonplace "Come in."

Schlesinger turned the handle gently and pushed the door wide open and walked straight in, Hafner, Brett and the Prime Minister close behind him.

"How do you do, Mr. Ostermann?" he said, stepping into the room, and with a quick wrench locked the door behind him and pocketed the key.

IV

THERE was a moment of complete and absolute silence during which Ostermann stood quite still within a yard from Schlesinger and surveyed the two revolvers that covered him, and the long, curved knife in Hafner's fingers.

They were strange visitors. In the foreground, Algy Brett, young and keen and alive; beside him, Schlesinger, disease marked, emaciated, careless that the moment was brimming over with danger; Hafner with blood-shot eyes and the signs of monomaniacal insanity becoming stronger and stronger every moment of proximity to Ostermann; Sterrith, wild-eyed and flabby and consumed with an abject fear, afraid to leave the door and yet afraid lest a figure should loom up out of the darkness behind him and clutch him.

The room was bare of furniture save for the center-table and two chairs. A bench, fitted with tools and strewn with instruments and bottles and all the paraphernalia and appendages of the savant, stood under the barred and shuttered windows, and in the middle of it, in a space swept clear of encumbrances, was a small square box of grayish metal with a handle-like lever protruding from it.

Schlesinger noted it in the flash of an eye

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and knew it for the machine in whose tiny circumference lay the fate of a nation.

An oil standard lamp was on the round table and Ostermann stood within the circle of its yellow glow, his eyes never flinching from the cool scrutiny with which he favored the intruders.

At last he spoke, moving slightly away from the table and out of the ring of light.

"A surprise visit, gentlemen. Yet, after all, perhaps not quite so unexpected as you might imagine. The car with the unlit lamps *was* yours, then, eh? Lucky you came so opportunely; I was just about to leave. And that would have been disappointing, eh, Mr. Brett? Mr. Schlesinger, won't you sit down? I hear you're something of an invalid these days. Hafner—stand back there and——Ah! So you know, do you? You've been listening, have you? You heard me talking to Kellerman, did you? Kellerman! Where is Kellerman? What have you done with him? Speak! What have you done with Kellerman?"

The quiet room was suddenly filled with noise, and the waiting inertness of the players in the little scene changed without a moment's warning to the keen alertness of the man on guard for his life. For Alsopp Ostermann, once clear of the circle of lamp-light, had slid with the wariness and the stealth of the snake, backwards toward the bench under the shuttered windows, his fingers—splayed open and moving as they groped, flung huge shadows on the wall opposite like a monster insect crawling high up toward the ceiling—feeling cautiously for the box with the lever! But Schlesinger moved step for step with him; Schlesinger's fingers groped also and Schlesinger's steel-like grip descended on Ostermann's wrist just as he reached the lever! The next instant both men were fighting like beasts for the mastery—Ostermann struggling to force the detective in the direction of the bench, Schlesinger exerting all his strength to keep him from it.

As they reeled and swayed and gained and lost Hafner hovered over them, his long knife ready in his upraised arm and his wild eyes bursting from their sockets in his eager watch for opportunity. Algy Brett leaped to Schlesinger's aid at a call from him.

"Take him on, boy, I'm nearly done! He's got a knife, so look out! Butt him on the head if you can. Just keep him going for a second while I do something to that box there. Got him?"

Schlesinger slipped out of Ostermann's grip as Brett closed in; then he sprang to the bench, searched rapidly in an inner pocket for something and found it—a thin black vial filled with a white fluid which smoked up into tiny spiral threads of vapor when he drew out the glass stopper from it.

Then he lifted the zinc lid from the box, removed a layer of rubber fiber from the coil of white wires within and poured the contents of the vial upon them. The result was a thin fizzing sound and the smell of burning magnesium.

The effect upon Ostermann was stupendous as he realized that Schlesinger had destroyed the connections and rendered the mines useless. He became suddenly possessed of a colossal power, the strength of a giant super-man. He threw out an arm and hurled Algy Brett into the farthest corner of the room and, as Hafner closed upon him in fierce exultancy, he whipped a revolver from his pocket and fired twice. Then, as the man fell groaning to the floor, Schlesinger, spinning round from the destruction of the box, revolver in hand, sent three quick bullets across the room, and Brett, still stunned and bewildered, staggered up to lend a hand.

But Ostermann seemed possessed of a charmed life. He was before their eyes and they fired at him—only to feel him springing at them from behind, a two-edged knife in one hand and a smoking pistol in the other. They were like madmen, trying to come to grips with a madman who eluded them as easily as a child playing blind-man's-buff.

But it couldn't go on. Ostermann was weakening—they could read it in his glazing eyes and streaked color and in the way his mouth fell sideways as though powerless, and he was losing blood fearfully. That last shot had buried itself in the man's bull neck. Schlesinger was almost a dying man, but he fought on—he and Algy fought on and on, both wounded, until Ostermann with the desperation of sick despair and with a mighty heave sent the table and the lamp crashing to the ground and deluged the room in darkness.

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MAD with excitement, dazed by their wounds, Schlesinger and Brett for the moment forgot their electric torches and began searching the room in a frenzy of haste, groping madly, wildly in the inky blackness for Ostermann. Algy clawed the shuttered windows, dreading to find them broken open and the man escaped; but the heavy bars still met across the fast-closed wood and he whooped feebly. The locked door was the only other way out of the room and Sterrith would cry out if he tried to get through that way. No, no, they had him! If they could only lay hold of him now, wounded as he was and skulking in a corner, or creeping away from them as they approached, their task would be finished! The wizard of the air would be their captive! Ostermann, the devil incarnate, would be caught at last! Somewhere in that dark room he was hiding from them, hiding from them like a hunted beast! In any moment their groping fingers might touch him, grip him and haul him out of that house in bondage!

Hafner was like a wild beast, crawling the floor on hands and knees, growling a guttural volume of curses and spitting vengeance, dragging his broken leg behind him, perspiring with the pain of it but patient of it till he could satisfy the blazing furnace of red hate in his heart.

Twice he circled the room, searching each inch of it, calling to them to get a light before it was too late, shouting to Sterrith to guard the door.

Then suddenly, just as Schlesinger's senses rushed back and he switched on his pocket-torch, Hafner's fingers encountered a body—a warm body crouching back into the corner by the door. With a scream of triumph he dragged it into the center of the room, into the little space of light shed from the torch in the detective's hand.

Schlesinger moved the light higher, the better to see what thing it was that Hafner was dragging over the boards; it shed a long, pale ray and showed, as in a garish mockery, Hafner squatting on the floor waiting with a fearful glee for the face of his enemy to be revealed to him, hoping to hear a prayer for mercy rush from his lips, wondering, even in his wild excitement, at Ostermann's silence, at the limp inertness of Ostermann's huge body.

But the torch revealed not Ostermann run to earth at last, but John Sterrith—John Sterrith dead, with Ostermann's two-edged knife sunk to the hilt in his heart!

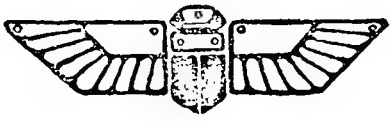
Speechless with dismay, they managed to find matches and relight the lamp.

The room was a shambles. Hafner's right leg was dragging after him and his arm hung helpless and shapeless at his side. Brett had a knife-thrust through a shoulder and a long sloping cut across his forehead and he was almost mad with agony. Schlesinger was not wounded badly, but his heart was racing and thumping in his body like a bursting vessel and a peculiar sensation that all the world was receding and swaying and dwindling before him overpowered him.

In the wall behind the door where Sterrith had been cowering a wide gap showed where a panel had been pushed back, and beyond the gap a man-hole led out to the roof of the gallery. The man-hole was flung open and the cool night wind blew through it and filtered into the attic, reviving Schlesinger sufficiently to bring him the conviction that to get out of that fearful house and beyond the boarding that girded it was their one chance of safety.

Sterrith's body they laid on the floor at the end of the room and then, each supporting the other, they made an agonizing way down the stairs and out into the night.

And far above them, lighting up the sullen heavens, an amber glow sped swiftly through the night, and the dull whirring of *Gray Ghost's* propellers, growing fainter and fainter as the glow faded, mocked their listening ears.



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Sir John Hawkwood

A Tale of the White Company in Italy

by Marion Polk Angellotti

CHAPTER XXIV

A DESPERATE STAND

IT WAS no easy task for me to put all thought of the Princess' sudden kindness out of my head, and set myself to caring for her safety, but by a great effort of will I accomplished the feat. I tore O'Meara from his lady-love, sent him below to get his men to horse, and followed him to the courtyard after bidding the Princess change her riding-cloak for that of Madonna Francesca and join me as soon as she was prepared. Both women looked bewildered at the order, but made no protest.

O'Meara had made a shrewd choice of his men, as I had known I might trust him to do. They were the dregs of the troop, fellows to whom under other circumstances I would not have trusted the Princess for any inducement the world could offer; yet, all being as it was, they were the safest possible escort for her, since, in their cupidity to win a rich reward from the Duke of Padua for her safe conduct, they would have defended her with the utmost fire and fury from any who sought to take her from them.

The excitement among my free companions was great, as I had of course foreseen. This new move of mine bewildered and startled them, and they thronged the court in an eager fashion, peering and muttering, looking for any hint of explanation. Luckily, however, their late mutiny and the fashion in which I had convinced them of their stupidity in doubting me had left them far from sure of their own judgment and had inspired them with an added respect for my shrewdness.

"You understand what you are to do?" I said shortly to the men O'Meara had picked out. "You will take the Princess to her kinsman, who will make the matter worth your while. If any try to bar your way, cut through them at whatever cost, and never rest until you are out of Prince Antonio's lands. As for the rest of us, we will join you in a day or two—I have a little matter of a castle to take by siege before I cry quits with Della Scala, and these fellows here shall help me in it and gather in some booty." This was a happy thought, as a loud cheer and a sudden lightening of faces proved. "Mount your horse; here comes the Princess. Guard her well, all of you, or when I reach Padua you shall answer for it!" With this threat I turned aside to hide a grim smile at my own assurance. I knew well enough that I should never see Padua, that I had, in fact, but a few minutes left to live. Already my ears were straining to catch the sound of the Prince's men within the castle, and my heart was beating fast in the fear that he might come

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before I could get the Princess safely on her way.

She came slowly into the court, cloaked and masked. I advanced to meet her, took her hand, and led her up to her horse. Her fingers lay cold against mine, but she carried her head high. There could be no leave-taking between us now, lest my troopers should see that we had come to an understanding, and suspect the tale I had told them. But as I helped her to mount I felt her clasp tighten on my hand and knew that the pressure spoke of her thanks as words could scarce have done.

"Good luck on your journey, Madonna Giulia!" I cried bluffly, so that all might hear. "Never tremble, these fellows will guard you well to Duke Francesco's doors! 'Tis a pity you have no wish to go there, but I doubt you will find him such an ogre as your fancy paints!"

Again her fingers pressed mine, then she withdrew them. "Good-by, Sir John Hawkwood," she breathed, so gently that none save myself caught the words. "Good-by, my gallant knight!" She was in the saddle, and I stepped back.

O'Meara had come up to me, very white, his eyelids lowered to hide the tears. "I'd rather die a thousand times than to be leaving you so!" he muttered in my ear. "By all the saints, and if it wasn't yourself that bade me be off, and if I didn't know that it was in this way I'm serving you best in all you long for, then I'd sell my soul before ever I'd stir a step! But never give up, Sir John! Fight like the divil himself, and who knows but you'll best them yet? Sure and you must, for my sake, no less! There'll be no joy left in the world for me on the day you leave it!" He put out both his hands and clasped mine as if he would never let them go.

An instant later he had sprung on his horse, the men had closed about Madonna Giulia, and the little troop was moving slowly out of the courtyard.

I had the drawbridge raised again and the portcullis lowered, then turned back and faced my men. At any moment now the alarm might sound, the Prince's troopers might be upon us. Every sound made me start, every clink of mail seemed to me to proclaim their approach. It was necessary that we should make a brave resistance, since in this way alone could we give the Princess a clear start. I must in some fashion persuade the fellows to support me, and in my extremity I longed for the tongue of angels.

"Come here, all of you," I cried boldly, standing by the court entrance. "I have a thing to tell you, and very little time in which to do it."

They came crowding about eagerly enough, and as the torch-light fell on their dark scarred faces I wondered if, in undertaking to play with such a set of fellows, I had not begun a task utterly without chance of fulfilment. Franz and Pierre stood in the first row, almost at my elbow, and their eyes were turned on me with a faithful, doglike look that brought me comfort. I looked about keenly, and discovered skulking in the rear the man I sought—Jacques, the traitor.

He was white beneath his darkened skin, and his face had a baffled, dangerous look horrible to see. He alone had understood the departure of the Princess, yet he had not dared to speak, for to do so he must convict himself of treason to his comrades, a thing never forgiven by them and always terribly avenged. He knew, also, that I must have learned of his treachery, and as our eyes met I saw the look of a trapped beast shoot across his features.

"Come here, Jacques!" I said curtly.

The men opened to let him through. For a moment he stood motionless, afraid to advance, afraid to refuse obedience. Very slowly he came forward until he stood before me. His face was ghastly now. He was sick with terror, yet I knew he was very dangerous in this mood, and I let not a motion of his right hand escape me.

"What have you done with the jewels you took from the Princess as payment for opening a passage for the Prince?" I asked sharply.

He gave a sharp gasp of horror, then made a desperate effort at denial. "Jewels? You are mad, *mon capitaine!*" he muttered insolently, through pallid lips. "I have seen no jewels, the worse luck for me——"

"So you are a liar as well as a traitor!" I cried. "The two go well together! You fool, I know all! I know how you took the stones from the mouth of the passage, how you pried loose the door to give free entrance——"

The movement that I had looked for came. His right hand went swiftly to the hilt of his dagger and grasped it, but I was

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before him. In an instant my sword was out of its sheath, and I ran him through with as small compunction as though he had been in body the dog he was at heart.

HE WENT down without a groan and lay huddled at my feet. I pulled my sword loose, then faced the circle of my men, who were gazing blankly at me and their fallen comrade. None spoke for a time, save to utter disjointed oaths, but there was no apparent feeling of anger. Pierre was the first to break the silence. "So Jacques was a traitor, eh, Sir John?" he cried. "I always thought as much—he had eyes that never met those of the man to whom he spoke. A good riddance, say I! I could never abide him. Is it your pleasure, Captain, to tell us what he did?"

"He plotted with the Princess, and opened a secret passage leading under the moat, by which Antonio della Scalla will enter the castle within the hour," I answered coolly, though my heart beat fast. The crisis was close upon me now.

There was a panic at this. The men swayed forward, cursing and shouting. "Then why do we linger here? To be butchered? Why did we not all go to Padua with the Princess?" one screamed, and the others took up the cry. They would have burst past me out of the court and under the portcullis, but I stood firm in the narrow entrance with my bared sword in my hand, and they knew its point too well to dare it.

"Be silent, and hear me!" I shouted sternly, backing my command with such oaths as I thought most likely to prove effective. "Antonio is coming. If we flee now, he will pursue us and overtake us. Whatever we do, there is no hope save in a brave resistance. We can defend ourselves better here than out upon the road. Come, courage! Are you afraid? You shame the White Company! Faith, I had known that my graceless rogues possessed few virtues, but I had thought that at least they feared nothing under heaven! Will you scatter in useless flight, only to be overtaken in the forest yonder where there are no walls behind which to make a stand?"

"Why have you sent away the Princess?" shrilled a furious voice.

I gave a reckless laugh and tossed my sword in the air. "Because I think that, whatever we do, we shall die to-night," I answered. "Stand or fly, the end will be the same; and I have a fancy to die like a good soldier. The Prince means ill by Madonna Giulia, therefore I will not let her fall into his hands. Look, my knaves, shall we not for once in our lives do a gallant deed? For my part, I am grown weary of blood and booty and drinking and ruffling, and am minded to strike a blow for a lady and do a deed of which, in my last moment on earth, I need not be ashamed. We have done little good in all our days, you and I; shall we not prove to-night that after all we are something better than mercenaries who cut throats for a bag of *scudi?* Shall we not fight for something else than gold? I am minded to prove my manhood now. Who follows me? Who fights for honor and the Princess Giulia?"

It was a strange appeal to make to such graceless villains. I had never meant to say such words—I think that the soft touch of Madonna Giulia's hands as she knotted her scarf across my breast had robbed me of my senses and turned me to a madman, prating of honor and chivalry and words that had not passed my lips for years. And yet I think that nothing I could have said would so have moved my men. I struck a chord in their breasts that had been long untouched; my fire lit an answering fire in their hearts. With a shock of amazement I saw a new look come into their dark faces.

"For old times' sake!" Pierre muttered. "For the time when I was a foolish boy and had never seen blood flow, and scarce knew a woman save my good old mother! Yes, to-night I'll fight for something else than gold!"

"I'll fight for Sir John!" Franz shouted. "Ah, Captain, I've served you now for ten long years, and where you bid me go I'll go, even if the path leads straight to death!"

"I'll strike one blow against Della Scala, I!" another shouted. "He thought to toss off our Captain, eh? He shall get a lesson to-night!"

An evil-faced fellow, whose present degradation shamed the good blood that ran in his veins, flung back his head and put his hand on his sword-hilt. "I'm weary, too, of being a cut-throat, Sir John Hawkwood!" he cried. "I'll bear myself once more as I did long years ago, and if I die 'twill be only a fair price to pay for the luxury!"

For one reason or another all declared roughly but honestly their willingness to

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fight. Perhaps their air of falling in with my mood was but a pretense—perhaps their true thought was that, since die they must in any case, it was as well to bear themselves with a reckless disregard for danger. I choose to believe better of them.

I laughed out merrily and clapped Pierre on the shoulder. "Well said, lads, all of you!" I cried, with a wave of my sword. "We will do good work to-night, and teach Antonio della Scala to say his prayers before he comes against the men of the White Company! Come, let us go block up the passage and undo as much as we may of this poor traitor's work——"

It was not to be. There was no time left us for preparations or defense. Even as I spoke my ears caught the sound for which I had long been listening, the echo of a battle-cry, the crash of arms and armor. The Prince's men had entered by the secret passage and were pouring up into the castle.

CHAPTER XXV

THE FIGHT ON THE STAIRS

WITH a shout to my troopers to follow me, I took to my heels, raced through the castle at full speed, and darted down the steps that led into that part of it which lay underground. At the foot of these stairs we came on our foes.

I have been in many a fight in my life, and have grown used to bloodshed, as men must who make a trade of killing. Cold steel was what brought me my bread, and I had little left to learn of warfare; but never have I fought as on that night in the deserted castle. It was a hopeless business from the first, since Gianni Potrero, the leader of the invaders, had brought a force that outnumbered my little band five to one. I knew it, and had no hope of conquering, or of going out alive from the castle walls. My whole aim was to give Madonna Giulia time to get well along the road to Padua, so that when the truth was learned she might defy pursuit.

I fought as I had not dreamed that any man could fight, with a wild exultation, a triumph, and all the knightly ardor of the days of my youth. Not for a moment could I forget the scarf that lay across my breast; it seemed to burn me through my cuirass, as once the Black Prince's sword had burned my shoulder when he touched it to make me knight. I was fighting for my lady. I was not a mercenary any more, but an English gentleman drawing sword for the woman I loved.

We were driven back up the steps, contesting every inch of the way. My troopers fought like heroes, cursing, stumbling, rallying when all seemed lost, bringing down man after man of our opponents. The odds against them were hopeless, and they fell one by one, fighting bravely to the last. God rest their souls, I say! If they were great sinners and had led most evil lives, at least they died that night as soldiers should long to die.

I could not have told how long we had been fighting. I had been driven to the top of the stairs and across the passage, and my breath was beginning to come fast. When I looked around I saw scarce half a dozen of my men about me, and all of them were panting and had smeared, bloody faces. The mass of our foes were bearing on us heavily in a new attack. It came over me with a shock of surprise that I was wounded, and glancing down I saw that Madonna Giulia's white scarf was stained with blood. Two more of my men fell. I turned, ran swiftly forward with a score of men at my heels, and dashed into the great hall of the castle.

Had Madonna Francesca obeyed the last order I had given her? I hoped so, for I must gain more time yet for the Princess. I looked at the staircase. Half-way up it crouched the figure of a woman muffled in a riding-cloak and disguised by a mask. The invaders saw it, too, and a great cry of "The Princess!" shook the walls. I cleared the room at a bound, took my stand on the stairs, and waited for the advance.

Gianni Potrero and his men had darted after me, and the torch-light shone on their armor and ran along their bare blades. They looked dangerous, for the entertainment had not gone according to their fancy —we had resisted too bravely and too well. Now they had conquered, for only Pierre and Franz were left beside me, and we stood three against thirty or more. Nevertheless, they hesitated, for my sword was a famous one, and it is well known that a staircase is well-nigh as good a coign of vantage as a guarded fortress.

The knowledge that I could still gain time for the Princess went to my head like wine. "Who comes next? Who comes next?" I

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cried tauntingly. "Brave and gallant gentlemen, do you hesitate to charge three men? What, is there not a single brave soldier among you all? Now shame on a country so poorly stocked with valor! Small wonder your Prince must needs hire me to fight his battles, if his own servants are so backward! See, I fling you my gauntlet—will not that rouse you? Or will you come if I call you cowards? That is a taunt to be wiped out by blood alone! Who comes to take the stairs?"

There was a stir at the door as two men came in, the soldiers pressing back to give them passage. I shook with laughter at the sight, for they were Antonio della Scala and his favorite, and neither of them had unsheathed his sword. It seemed that a share in the fight was not to their taste; they preferred to watch from the rear. The Prince was peering at me with an evil look, his lids fallen, his pale face twisted into lines of mocking triumph. Della Torre stood in haughty silence, a splendid figure of disdain.

"Well, Sir John Hawkwood," said the Prince, "we have come to take you to Verona and give you a taste of the wheel." His gaze fell on the cloaked figure that crouched behind me on the stairs. "Giulia!" he cried, and at the hoarse note that spoke in his voice I thanked heaven that the Princess was now well on her way. "Never fear, cousin—we have come to save you and avenge you! Keep your courage but a few moments longer, all will go well now." He wheeled angrily on Gianni Potrero, who stood fingering his sword. "Man, why are you loitering here? Do I pay you to stare like any peasant, or to fight like a soldier—which? Rally your men, charge the stairs, and take me that villain!"

Messer Gianni looked first at his master and then at me and shifted his feet like an uneasy schoolboy. His men, massed about him, did the same, though they scowled at me and muttered curses. "Domeniddio!" the Prince cried fiercely. "Are you all cowards, then? Was this knave Hawkwood the one brave man in my service? Are you afraid of him, all of you? I will have you thrown in prison when we reach Verona if you do not mend your ways! I will dress you as monks and thrust you into a monastery, for surely you are not soldiers! Will no one pluck up heart to take the stairs?" His voice turned shrill with rage and he bit his lip till the blood came.

Only a few moments more, and the Princess might smile at all pursuit! I was full of a great joy and triumph that conquered even a certain sickening faintness, the result of my wound, which was beginning to creep over me. "Aye, who will come?" I cried, saluting them with my sword. "Are you all afraid of me? You have good cause for fear! I am not the cut-throat any more, the tavern loiterer, the bully—I am Sir John Hawkwood, an English gentleman, the comrade of the Black Prince! I cast down the gauntlet to all knaves and ruffians, whether they be princes born or common rogues like Messer Gianni there! Come forward yourself, Antonio della Scala—let us see which can deal the better strokes, a man who shames his royal blood, or a knight who combats for a lady and has faith and loyalty on his side! Ah, I thank God for this chance to go back to my youth, to die as I have not lived! Who comes to take the stairs?"

"Will no one answer him?" the Prince screamed, hoarse with rage.

"I will," said Ranucio della Torre coldly. "It is greater honor than he merits that a noble should touch his blade, but at least he shall learn that there is one man here who dares to face him!" He pulled out his sword and ran forward. "Ho, Sir John Hawkwood, say your prayers!" he cried as he came.

"Say yours," I cried back, "my lord the favorite! You will need them sorely before our bout is done!"

As our blades rang together my exultation grew. I was fighting for Madonna Giulia. Here before me, with his sword crossing mine, was the man who had plotted against her for his own gain. Here was the man who had sworn to put on me the stain of treason. I meant to kill him, though it should be the last act of my life. The torchlight fell full on his dark, somber, splendid face, on the jewels in his hat and the gold broidery of his cloak. There was bitter hate in his eyes. I had been his enemy for a long time, and he, too, meant that our score should be wiped out by blood.

HE FOUGHT well, Ranucio della Torre. He was a base man and an evil man, but never did I meet with greater skill and courage than his. From the instant that our blades crossed I knew that I was pitted against a marvelous fencer

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—and every moment I was growing weaker. He was trying to bewilder me with many strange thrusts and feints and parries, but I had lived out my life among swordsmen and knew all his tricks. We were both breathing hard, and I was turning faint. The steel rang and clashed, but save for this noise the room was very still. All were looking at us wide-eyed, as at a play.

Knowing my increasing weakness, I ceased to defend myself and began to attack. I tried thrusts known to few living fencers, keen darts, subtle feints. He knew them, and smiled in dark mockery. I pressed on him fiercely, and he stood his ground without wavering. One by one I tried the tricks that had given me victory over skilful rivals, and one by one he turned them off with a sneer. I had met my match at last.

Suddenly Della Torre's point slipped within my guard. As quick as thought I leaped aside, but he had grazed me, and I felt a swift sting on my neck and the trickle of running blood. I recovered on the instant and renewed the conflict, my face hot, my knees weakening.

"A hit, a hit! Ha, you mercenary, it shall be the heart next!" Della Torre cried, his somber eyes glowing with hate and triumph.

"To boast too soon brings ill luck," I retorted. All was growing dark around me. The great hall seemed a black blur that framed Della Torre's exultant, passionate, vindictive face. The end was coming fast. Soon my senses would fail me and I would swoon like any girl. If I was to conquer, I must act now or never. "For the Princess!" I muttered, as, gathering all my strength, I essayed the trick that I had learned in Paris—the high thrust, the sweeping parry, the low lightning-like dart. Our swords rang together fiercely, then mine slipped under and ran straight through Della Torre's heart.

For a moment he stood upright and motionless, then his muscles loosened and he went down with a great crash and lay motionless at my feet. I could not see him now for the growing darkness. I had fought to the end, tasted the joys of restored knighthood, drained the cup to the dregs. With my last strength I bent my sword across my knee and broke it. "Saint George and England!" I cried hoarsely, going back by instinct to the battle-shout of my youth; and I flung the broken pieces down into the hall and reeled forward after them.

The blood and the conflict had maddened Antonio. Seeing the stairs left clear, he leaped over Della Torre's body, darted up them, and caught the cloaked figure in his arms. "Ah, Giulia, I have you now!" he shouted, and tore the mask from the woman's face; then stood dumb, gazing into the eyes of Francesca di Montalto.

"Where is the Princess?" he cried at last, looking about him with the eyes of a madman.

I leaned on the wall and laughed. My mirth had a strange sound, and I could hardly stand erect. "The Princess is well on her way to Padua, my lord!" I answered. "Before dawn she will be with Duke Francesco. He will guard her well, never fear! Choose yourself another wife, you will never see her again!"

"Curses on you!" he moaned, with blood on his lips. "You shall die by such torments as you have never dreamed——"

"I care not what you do to me!" I cried, swaying on my feet. "You can not take away the memory of this hour, or the knowledge that I have saved Madonna Giulia! You can not rob me of the knighthood that I have won back the right to claim! Saint George and England!" And then dense blackness settled over me, and I flung out my hands and fell.

CHAPTER XXVI

A PRISONER

MY WOUND had not been a deep one, though loss of blood had caused a long swoon enduring for some three hours. I had felt small joy when my senses returned and I found myself little the worse for wear. I cursed Gianni Potrero, who was on his knees beside me when I opened my eyes. He laughed in answer, with more than a touch of malice. "We have been giving you as good care as a great noble would have found at our hands," he said, setting down the cup of wine which he had been pouring down my throat. "It is the Prince's own bidding that we cure you—he values you too much to lose you, Sir John!"

I passed the night in one of the upper rooms, strongly guarded, and in the morning they led me down the stairs and into the great hall, with my hands bound behind my back, and my scabbard hanging empty at my side.

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At the foot of the stairs we halted, and I saw below me a strange scene. Antonio della Scala stood at the end of the hall, pale and cold, with an ominous glimmer in his half-shut eyes; and before him knelt a woman shrouded in black robes and a black hood. Beside them, on a sort of litter, was stretched the body of Ranucio della Torre. The sun, slanting through the windows, gleamed on his bright cuirass half hidden by its violet sash, his strong, supple figure, his splendid, somber face set in the cold lines of death. On the instant I understood. No doubt a rider had taken the ill news to Verona in the night, and Madonna Violante had come in haste with the litter for the bearing of her dead husband to his home.

The sight of her upturned face made me shudder. She was an evil woman, and I had borne her no love, but I could not doubt now that she had lost all that made her life worth the living, and despite myself I pitied her. She was white as marble, and as cold. "My lord," she said in low hard tones, as I stood watching her, "Ranucio della Torre is dead. Your chosen friend, your most faithful servant, has been killed by a mercenary and a bravo. Life is over for me now, save for this one thing—the winning of vengeance! My lord, I ask for blood as the payment of blood! I ask for the death of Sir John Hawkwood!"

"Take comfort, madonna," said Antonio, in his low, silky voice. "By my royal blood I swear that his act shall not go unavenged! I, too, have a score to settle with Sir John Hawkwood, and when I am done with him I think that his worst enemy will be quite content! A week from now you and I will stand side by side in Verona, Madonna Violante, and watch what remains of this brave soldier, and then you shall tell me if I have not done what should appease the ghost of Ranucio della Torre!" He raised her up and led her out to where her escort waited, and as I followed with my guards I reflected that matters looked very dark for me.

Madonna Francesca did not return to Verona with us. One of the men who rode beside me, after some urging, told me her fate, and I learned with amazement that she had been sent under a small escort to Padua, to rejoin her mistress. Antonio had desired to send a message to his cousin to the effect that since she had chosen to leave him she might make her home hereafter with Francesco Carrara, but need never hope to see again her lands and castles.

IT IS NOT my purpose to say much concerning the journey from Castel Paura to Verona. I might tell how the pain of my wound worked upon me till I reeled in my saddle and would have fallen but for my bonds; or how the Prince sometimes checked his horse to gaze on me maliciously and tell me of his plans for my entertainment when we should reach the city. But, truth to tell, I cared little for either suffering or taunts. I was content, and my calm indifference first puzzled, then enraged the Prince.

We entered the city by the Porta de' Borsari. I was a proud man in those days, and at another time it would have been bitter enough to me, this entry into the city, with my hands and feet tied together and armed guards pressing all about my horse. The news ran about the streets, and crowds of people gathered to gape at me and point and whisper. I scarcely noted it. Fatigue and pain and humiliation had no power to touch me when glancing down at my cuirass I saw knotted over it the scarf Madonna Giulia had fastened there.

I was lodged underneath the castle in one of the cells where state prisoners were often confined. Gianni Potrero saw me conducted there, and lingered to point mockingly at the bare stone walls and the pitiful glimmer of sunlight that filtered through the window. "No very lordly lodging, eh, Sir John Hawkwood?" he said, standing staring at me, with his hands on his sides and his cheeks puffed out. "But yet a better home than you will have when a week has passed!"

I laughed and flung myself down on a pile of straw in the corner. "Any lodging is good enough for an old soldier like myself," I answered. "You are a poor fighter, Messer Gianni. Della Torre, though as villainous as yourself, had at least the advantage of some courage!"

"Your tongue will wag less bravely when you have had a taste of the wheel," he growled, then crossed himself, and went out with no further effort to divert himself at my expense. I laughed again, but felt half regretful that he had gone. Confinement when waiting for death is no cheerful business to the most courageous of men.

Knowing as I did that Antonio was not one to delay in a matter of vengeance, I was

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not a little amazed when three long days went by without bringing any developments. Morning and even a sour-faced jailer came stumbling into my cell with food and drink, and every night Gianni Potrero came to see that I had not been spirited away. It was easy to guess from his air of baffled sulkiness that it pleased him very ill to see me still alive, but I could drag nothing from him that helped me to understand the strange delay.

Left alone, I racked my brains in vain for an explanation. When my jailer came in with my frugal meal I began to talk to him, and he leaned on the wall and watched me as I ate. "I'll stop until you have finished. 'Twill spare me from coming back to fetch your dish," he muttered ill-temperedly.

"Tell me, Sir Sour-Face," I demanded, "why am I kept so long in this pestilent hole?"

"I do not come here to chatter, but to fetch your food," he answered shortly. From his manner it was plain to me that he could satisfy me if he chose, and I had dealt with too many ruffians in my life to be at a loss with this one.

"See," I said, taking out and displaying two coins. "You shall have your choice—shall I give you these, or shall I break open your head before you can reach the door of this room? One or the other I will do as surely as my name is John Hawkwood, and if you are a man of sense you will choose the gold, for my arm is no light one!"

I had risen and shouldered my way between him and the door, and he shrank away, looking at me with dread and at the gold with avarice. "But," he protested, more civilly than he had ever spoken yet, "if the Prince should learn of what I tell you, he might give me a taste of the rack, and that is worse than a broken head, signore!"

"He shall never learn through me," I answered. "Come, will you speak or must I teach you?"

"I will speak!" he cried hastily, and clutched at the gold, which, however, I kept well out of his reach until his part of the bargain was fulfilled. "The Prince has had no time to think of you and your affairs. News has come to him that on the very day of your capture the White Company, hearing you were prisoner, surrendered the town of Lerino to the Paduans. My Lord Cortesia Seregno, the Prince's brother-in-law, was taken prisoner and carried to Padua, and they are moving heaven and earth to raise a ransom for him. I know nothing more." He snatched the coins from my hand, slipped past me, and vanished, bolting the door behind him.

I flung myself down again on the straw. Here was news indeed! Whatever was demanded, Antonio must pay, for, having already roused Italy to indignant horror by the murder of his brother, he could scarce afford to kindle further resentment by an appearance of lukewarmness in the cause of his brother-in-law. Well, it mattered little.

CHAPTER XXVII

A NEW JAILER

IT SEEMED to me that I had passed a long eternity in confinement. Accustomed as I was to continual activity and excitement, the spending of my time behind bars was a keen torment to me. My wound gave me no more pain and my strength had come back, but I suffered more than I had done on the afternoon they brought me into Verona.

It was morning, and I was sitting staring up at the barred window, wondering how matters had gone with O'Meara. Suddenly I heard the sound of feet in the passage without—not the shuffling tread of my jailer, but the hard fall of heavy boots and the ringing of spurs. I got to my feet on the instant, squaring my shoulders with a reckless laugh. No doubt they were coming for me at last, and I could have found it in my heart to be thankful that the suspense was over. I had never failed when the test came, and I knew that I could trust myself not to fail now, whatever tortures they might try upon me.

The door swung open, and I gaped like any fool to see the Prince himself standing on the threshold with Gianni Potrero and a score of troopers behind him. He wore a splendid dress of rose and gold, and carried in his hand a jeweled box from which he was composedly eating comfits. For a long moment he stood staring at me from under lowered lids, his eyes gleaming with hate and malice, his lips curving in an evil smile. I gave him back look for look.

"So, you are not tamed yet, Sir John!" he drawled at last. "You have a stubborn back, but it will bend before the play is over. I have come to talk to you, and before I

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begin we will have your hands bound behind you, lest your temper should drive you to some reckless act." He nodded to his men.

I allowed them to bind my hands with a shrug of disdain. A struggle would have been hopeless, nor would I stoop to it. "If I were a royal Prince and the last of the Scaligeri, my lord," I said with a laugh, "I think I should take shame to fear a plain English adventurer so much that I dared not face him save when his hands were pinioned! Faith, I have the best of the matter, for I do not fear you one little bit!"

"You will not have the best of the matter long," he answered, with a threat under his smiling sneer. "Go, leave me!" he added to his men, and they trooped out and closed the door, Gianni alone remaining. The Prince leaned on the wall and stared at me, and I lounged carelessly, as if quite indifferent to my fate.

"You have thrown the dice with me, Sir John," Antonio drawled, "and you have lost. Is your heart quite stout and untroubled when you reflect that I may tear you on the rack and break you on the wheel?"

I nodded. "I am indifferent as to what you do," I answered, "and I do not understand why you waste so many words. It is not the way of English princes to stand chattering with men who have offended them and who are in their power."

His fixed smile did not alter. "Now some rulers might call you insolent, Sir John," he said, "but I have determined to be patient. I have made up my mind to be merciful, do you understand? I shall not sentence you to the rack or to the wheel. I shall not hurt you in any way. Am I not a generous enemy, Sir John Hawkwood?"

"Such is not your name among your foes," I answered. "And of one thing I am very certain, and that is that you do not wish me well or mean well by me."

"I HAVE always heard that you were shrewd, Sir John, and now I perceive that what I heard was true," the Prince replied, showing his teeth in a noiseless laugh. "Listen, my friend. Your gallant chevaliers of the White Company have deserted my banner and surrendered the town of Lerino into Francesco Carrara's hands."

"I am glad of that," I said, with a shrug. "If I am to meet an evil end through you, I can not see why you should continue to enjoy the towns I took for you."

"My brother-in-law, Cortesia Seregno, was taken prisoner when your men surrendered," Antonio went on slowly.

I laughed. "He is little loss to you, and less gain to the Paduans."

"It appears that Carrara is of your mind," said the Prince, apparently not at all disturbed, "for when I sent a messenger to offer a rich ransom, he sent me back word that he valued my brother-in-law only as a means to an end. He would give up Cortesia Seregno, he said, in exchange for a more dangerous enemy, a man whose life imperiled his power and his sovereignty, a dangerous soldier against whom he had long vowed vengeance. Can you guess who this was?"

"No," I answered, "nor shall I try."

"You have heard the name many times," he said, smiling evilly at me. "It is Sir John Hawkwood!"

All was clear to me on the instant, and I take some pride in the remembrance that I met the news without a quiver of the face to add to my enemy's triumph. "Well?" I said coolly.

My impassivity forced a gesture of annoyance from him. "Has not Francesco Carrara often sworn that if ever you fell into his hands he would hang you like any thief?" he demanded, his even voice growing shriller and sharper.

"Yes," said I, "he has sworn that."

"It is my intention to give him a chance to fulfil his vow!" Antonio informed me. "I am going to send you to him, Sir John!"

We stood facing each other in silence for a moment, then the Prince laughed and helped himself to another comfit. "Danger has given you steady nerves, my friend," he mocked, "but for all your brave front I think you are far from happy at this moment. It is not a pleasant thing to be hanged like a dog." He came closer, and thrust his snarling face against mine. "I had planned to kill you myself, Sir John," he said, with cold fury in his voice. "I had planned to torture you and humble you before I snuffed out your life; but this way will do fully as well! You shall go to Francesco Carrara, who has hated you for many years and has sworn to take vengeance on you. In this fashion I shall gain doubly, for I shall rid myself of the debt I owe you, and I shall ransom my brother-in-law at no

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greater cost than the surrender of your cursed body. When you are set to dangle in the air, and all turns black about you, and you struggle in vain to breathe, then recall that you robbed Antonio della Scala of his bride, and ask yourself if the game were worth the price! Good-by, Sir John Hawkwood! In an hour you leave Verona on your way to the Paduan Court."

CHAPTER XXVIII

ON THE ROAD

"AND what came next, Sir John?"

"They brought the French King safe into the English camp, is it not so? And the young Duke of Burgundy as well, he that to-day stands higher in France than his brother and sovereign? You helped to capture them?"

They were urging their horses close about me, bending forward eagerly lest they should lose a word I let fall.

"Come, come, we are wasting time! Already we have dallied enough on the way!" the voice of the leader cut in sharply. Again my guards set spurs to their horses, and we started briskly forward. We were very near to Padua now.

We had passed the night at a roadside inn, and as we supped before the fire I had made acquaintance with the score of Paduan troopers whom Francesco Carrara had sent to Verona to be my guards. They had met me before, in many a skirmish, respected my skill at warfare, and now showed me rough civility. The cheerful way in which I met adversity, too, soon won me their approval, and when I began to jest with them over the wine and tell them battle-tales they were ready to swear friendship with me.

"Indeed, 'tis a pity you ever took service with that rogue Della Scala," the leader told me, with real regret. "Why not have come to Padua and fought for Duke Francesco? Now you have served him so that he has sworn to hang you, and hang you he will. It is evil luck, as I live!"

"If I am to die to-morrow, let me drink to-night!" I cried laughing, and refilled my cup. We sat late about the fire, but were early astir and had taken the road to Padua by the time the sun was up.

I rode along in a strange content. Before me lay an old and bitter enemy and the death of a dog, yet I felt no tremor and no grief. I was ready to meet my fate with a smile, I who had been so fierce and so embittered once, who had found no joy save in smiting my foes.

I had risked and lost my life for the service of the Princess Giulia, and in the losing I had gained a far more precious thing—the renewal of my youth, the recovery of my knighthood. Why should I desire to live longer, since I had already done the supreme thing? She was safe now, I could help her no more, and life far from her presence would be ceaseless torture.

We rode at last into Padua, passed through the narrow streets lined with shops and quaint houses, and entered the more splendid quarter of the town. Spring was in the air, and the city had a blue sky overhead and a carpet of flowers underfoot. I was in the city of Francesco Carrara, my old enemy.

We turned aside into a narrow lane. A great blank wall loomed before us, shutting out the sun.

"We are coming to the private entrance of the royal palace," said the leader curtly. "My commands, Sir John, are to bring you in by the secret staircase. Be silent now; make no noise."

We halted at a door built into the stone wall, and the leader knocked on it softly with his sword-hilt. After an instant it swung open, and there was a low-voiced conference, some man within asking questions which my jailer answered. Then I was curtly bidden to dismount, a dozen of my guards pressed round me, and I was led into a long dark hall, empty save for the man who had admitted us. This fellow now touched the wall with practised fingers, and to my amazement I saw the wooden panels glide away under his hands, revealing a narrow staircase leading upward into the dusk. Obeying a low command, I stumbled forward, my guards around me.

At the top there was more juggling with the wall, and a second opening appeared, giving us entrance into a long, low room hung with tapestry. Two men were standing by the window, conversing in whispers; one had the look of a soldier, the other of a secretary. The latter started at our appearance, then came forward hastily. "You have succeeded? You have brought him?" he cried, peering at me with short-sighted eyes. "Is it Sir John Hawkwood? Wait, then, until I carry the news to my lord." He

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went hastily across to the door, knocked, and vanished into an inner room.

I knew now that I was in the antechamber of Francesco Carrara, and my heart beat quicker at the thought. My guards were gazing on me with rough pity, and I forced myself to look back at them with a laugh. Scarcely an instant had passed when the secretary reappeared.

"Sir John Hawkwood is to enter—alone," he said, and at the last word I saw a glance of surprise pass around the circle.

I nodded carelessly in assent and passed through the open door, which closed behind me as soon as I had entered.

CHAPTER XXIX

CARRARA OF PADUA

IT WAS a magnificent room, an apartment glittering with all the splendor suitable in a royal palace. The walls were set in square oaken panels crusted with blue and gold and gilded with wreaths and hanging garlands—a medley of rich coloring that caught the light and flung it back in a ruddy blaze. The breeze, coming in strongly at the window, blew apart the heavy curtains and brought me the sweet, heavy scent of many flowers blooming in the gardens below.

In a great throne-like chair beside a littered table sat a man whom I guessed at once to be the Duke of Padua. I have heard many say that princes are but men, and in no wise different from other and less fortunate mortals, and no doubt this is true; but in every ruler that ever I saw, good, bad, or indifferent, I have found one common trait—an assurance born of years of command, an unconscious look of superiority that would proclaim the sovereign were its owner clad in a leather jerkin and the rude cuirass of a common soldier. Francesco Carrara possessed this characteristic even beyond most princes. He had the royal air here in his palace, but I knew that he would also have had it on the road, in battle, wherever fate might choose to place him.

He was a man of middle age, not tall, but well and strongly knit and of powerful build. His hair was dark, and he had sharp, shrewd, gray eyes and a straight determined mouth that could yet curve into a pleasant smile. Of all the princes I had seen, none save Edward Plantagenet had ever so impressed me as this my old enemy, before whom I now stood for the first time in my life.

For some moments we remained motionless and silent. The Duke's eyes met mine steadily and curiously, and I would not be the first to look away. He had a great dog curled up at his feet, and presently the animal, fretted by my sudden entrance and the long pause, rose with a snarl and advanced threateningly toward me. I put out my hand to it, and after an instant of distrust and hesitation it came closer, eyed me questioningly, and in the end began to lick my fingers.

The Duke of Padua smiled curiously. "I fear my dog is a Veronese, Sir John Hawkwood," he said, in the low, level tones of a strong man, "since he leaves me in this base fashion for one who is the enemy of my land."

"Not a Veronese, my lord," I answered, as cheerfully as I could, "for, believe me, to-day the Veronese hate me as much as ever the Paduans did."

"Yes, the Paduans have hated you for a long time," he said, with a quiet nod. "It is of that we have to speak. Will you sit down, Sir John?"

I shook my head, surprised by the invitation. It amazed me that I should be admitted here without guards. True, I was unarmed, and any injury I might do the Duke would not help me to escape, but nevertheless his indifferent unconcern showed in strange contrast to the action of Prince Antonio, who had dared speak to me only when my hands were bound.

The Duke leaned back in his chair and regarded me with inscrutable intentness. "You have been my foe for a long time, Sir John," he said, "and though in my life I have had many foes—princes and dukes and cardinals and generals, rich men and proud, strong men and great, I must do you the justice of admitting that none of them brought me such distress as you. It was natural, that. Kings and princes are often poor soldiers, and you are a very good one. For years now, whatever duchy or republic you supported, you have found yourself arrayed in arms against Padua. You have taken my towns and pillaged them, and ravaged my country and razed my castles. You have baffled me as no other man on earth has ever done. I am not patient, and therefore, some time since, I took an oath of vengeance against you. Perhaps it reached your ears?"

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"To be sure," I nodded, caressing the head of the great dog, who was still licking at my hand. "You swore that if ever I fell into your power, you would hang me like any thief—have I not got it right?"

He looked at me steadily, as if searching for some sign of fear or weakness. "And what did you do," he asked curiously, "when you heard of my intention?"

"Faith, I swore an oath of my own!" I answered. "I swore that if ever you fell into my power I would march you through my camp tied to my stirrup, that all might see the end to which Sir John Hawkwood brings his enemies!"

The Duke smiled, without any sign of resentment. "Those who told me that you had courage did not lie," he said thoughtfully. "There is no reason why I should show you any mercy, Sir John. You agree with me, do you not? It is evident that you would have shown me none. You have injured me in a thousand ways, and you have done me but one service——"

"I did that one without intent, then," I cried, "nor can I call it to mind, my lord!"

"A week ago," he answered, "you sent me my young cousin, the Princess Giulia, of whom I have long sought to get possession."

"It was for her own sake I did that, not for yours, and you owe me no thanks," I answered curtly. I had no wish to speak of the Princess. Death and I were old friends, I could face him with a calm defiance, but I was not sure that I could talk of Madonna Giulia without playing the woman.

"AFTER all," the Duke said deliberately, "I am not sure that you did me so great a service when you sent her to me. I desired a rich and docile ward, whom I might give in marriage in a fashion which would increase my power by a suitable alliance. Instead, I find myself saddled with a lady whose lands remain in the clutches of Antonio della Scala; a lady, moreover, who appears far from pliant—who has, in fact, a strong will of her own, and is scarce likely to play the part of a pawn in my game of chess. It may be that very soon I shall wish her back in Verona, unless she mends her ways."

I could have sworn that there was a twinkle in his eye and certainly I was near laughter myself. Madonna Giulia was assuredly not one to wed according to her cousin's will, or to follow any guidance save that of her own desires. "Truly, you are right, my lord," I said cheerfully. "If you join issue with the Princess, I think you will find her a worse enemy than ever you found me."

"Well, then, it is plain that I owe you nothing at all," he pointed out briskly. "Do you wish to throw yourself upon my mercy, to make an appeal for grace?"

"No, my lord," I answered, crumpling the dog's ears in my fingers. "Why should I do that? We have been fair foes for years. You would never have caught me could I have prevented it, but fortune has proved your friend and you have got me at last. Very well, I do not complain; it is a risk I have long taken. Call in your men and order them to string me up. I will submit with a good grace, and wish you joy of your victory and your vengeance."

"You do not wish to plead, then?" he asked curiously.

"I am sure, my lord," I answered, with the bow I had learned in the days when I served Prince Edward, and which I had not troubled to bestow on Antonio della Scala and his like, "that you would not have begged mercy of me had I captured you. Give me credit, I beg, for being as good a soldier as yourself."

"Yet I scarce dare order your execution," he murmured, with a grave shake of the head. "You can not know in what peril I stand on your account——"

"Peril?" I stared at him blankly.

"Peril, indeed. There is a madman here in Padua, the Irish gentleman who brought the Princess from Verona. He has forced his way into my presence a dozen times, now pleading, now threatening. He kneels before me and craves mercy for you with tears in his eyes, then leaps up and swears to kill me if a hair of your head falls, though I shelter myself behind a thousand bolts and bars and defend myself with a thousand soldiers. I could find him diverting, this gentleman, if he did not cause me to go in hourly terror of my life. Do you find it agreeable, Sir John, to have a madman for a friend?"

I laughed despite myself, but there was a moisture in my eyes, so exactly did this account jibe with the action I should have expected from Michael O'Meara. If I had but one ally in the world, at least that one was devoted and faithful to the death. "Messer O'Meara was never made to move

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in courts, my lord," I answered. "He has too true a heart. Do not let him suffer because of his loyalty to me—that is the one request I shall ever make you."

He looked at me again in silence. "You are not the man I had pictured you, Sir John Hawkwood," he said at last. "It does not cause me great surprise that this Messer O'Meara defends you with such warmth. I think I might have felt some fondness for you myself had you served me instead of fighting me with such fury. Why did you sell your sword to Antonio della Scala?"

"Not for love of him, my lord, for I always held him a villain," I answered frankly. "For a bag of gold coins."

"That speech runs with the evil tales I have heard of you, but not with the nature I had thought I read in your face," said the Duke, and I, famed over all Italy for my truculence, stood dumb beneath the rebuke; for it was so that the Black Prince might have spoken. "Does an English knight combat only for gain? Well, no matter. Tell me this—when you fought me in Della Scala's cause did you believe that he had the right of the quarrel?"

"No, my lord," I answered, looking him frankly in the eyes. "I believed you to be right; but for my own interest I chose to fight on the other side."

"And now Antonio della Scala has thrown you off and turned against you—for his own interests," said the Duke shrewdly. "And you blame him for that, no doubt; yet is the one worse than the other?"

"That is true," I answered honestly, for it was never my way to avoid a fair thrust. "But it is useless to talk of this, my lord—I have seen these things before you pointed them out. I have learned much in the past few days——"

"And I could guess, I think, who was your teacher," the Duke interrupted, with that strange hint of a smile playing once more about his lips. "Then if you were not to die so soon, Sir John, you would in future sell your sword only where there was right as well as gold?"

"Small use to consider such questions now!" I cried. "Your hangman will save me the trouble of putting together the pieces of my life. Come, why do you not call him in? I think, on the whole, I prefer death to the cheerful occupation of considering my past sins."

THE Duke of Padua rose from his chair and stood facing me across the table. "Before I call in the hangman, let us have matters clear between us," he said calmly. "If you were to live longer, Sir John, you would fight only for a cause you approved; and you believe that in my quarrel with Antonio della Scala I am in the right. Is that true?"

I looked at him blankly. The dog, anxious for more caresses, began to jump on me fawningly, but I scarcely noted it in the sudden whirl of my thoughts.

"This being the case," said Francesco Carrara cheerfully, "will you take service with me, Sir John Hawkwood? If you consent, I will do for you what I have never done before—I will break my oath and forego my vengeance. No doubt I can get absolution for my broken vow from his Holiness the Pope, who is well disposed to me at present. Well, and how say you?"

Still I stared at him in silence. The thing was so unexpected that I could find no words. The Duke continued to regard me with a quiet smile.

"Well," he said, "have you hated me so long that you can not bring yourself to fight in my cause? That will pass; last month I hated you with all my heart, yet now I find you as much to my taste as ever I found a man yet. Take service with me, and within the year we will have driven Antonio della Scala out of Verona. It is said that you are the best soldier in Italy, Sir John, and I think you will be of more use to me in armor and a-horseback than dangling by a halter. Am I not right?"

"You do not mean that I shall die?" I stammered, far more at a loss than when I had believed that he was bent upon my execution. "You wish me to live—to serve you?"

"I read once, in some old book," said the Duke thoughtfully, "that a foe, won over, sometimes makes a better ally than one who has always been devoted. And it is my own belief, Sir John, that the man who makes as brave an enemy as you should make the best of friends. We have grown to know each other well, you and I, because we hated; but I think we might as easily feel affection. You are to my taste, a thing I can not say of many men. Am I, perhaps, to yours?"

"Yes," I said, in a low voice that was not altogether steady, "to my taste as never any

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man I have served, save one, has ever been! I will repay you, my lord. I will fight for you as I fought years ago in France——"

"That is well," the Duke responded cheerfully, "for I mean to put the command of all my forces in your hands. You might do me great treachery and bring me to ruin if you abused my trust, but I do not fear that. I have learned to read men, Sir John, and I can read you."

"If you read me right, you read great gratitude, my lord!" I answered, and bent my knee to him as I had not bent it to any ruler since I stood for the last time before the Black Prince.

CHAPTER XXX

IN DUKE FRANCESCO'S GARDEN

BEFORE me stretched a wilderness of flowers and trees, threaded by walks paved with marble. Broad sloping terraces, covered by many-hued blossoms, ran off toward the distant walls that shut the palace in. Roses grew all about in flaming vivid masses, and lilies and myrtle were everywhere. I heard the soft plashing of many fountains, and the murmur of water in the conduits. Nothing met my eyes save flowers and foliage and birds and great floating butterflies, and the warm blue of the Springtime heaven.

The Duke of Padua had walked with me to the gate of the garden, his hand resting on my shoulder. "You will find her in among the blossoms, my pretty cousin," he said, as he left me. "She desires to thank you for the service that you did her. She says, Sir John, that never in any tale of chivalry did she read of a more gallant knight than you." He turned away, and I passed into the garden, still dazed with the happenings of the last hour.

Where to search for the Princess I did not know, but as I wandered aimlessly down one of the many paths a sound of talk and laughter fell on my ears, and an instant later I stumbled on as pretty a scene as man could wish. On the rim of a marble fountain, dipping her hands in the foamy spray, sat Francesca di Montalto. She had a crown of roses in her misty golden hair, and flowers lay thick about her feet where she had dropped them when she began to play with the water. O'Meara sat beside her, singing an Irish love-catch and laughing down into her upturned face. So absorbed and happy did they appear that I would have passed on had they not caught sight of me and leaped up with a cry of welcome.

"Glory be!" O'Meara whooped ecstatically, bearing down upon me. "'Tis Sir John himself!" He caught me in his arms and hugged me until my ribs were near to cracking, then released me and began to dance around me in a circle. "Glory be! Glory be!" he repeated again and again, between tears and laughter. "Bedad, I knew very well 'twas not Antonio della Scala would have the killing of you!" He flung himself on me again, and for some moments he behaved in the most foolish fashion possible.

"And now," O'Meara continued presently, drawing himself up in a stately manner, "I'll be thanking you, Sir John, to congratulate me in proper terms on my new dignity!" He paused impressively. "'Tis a stupendously exalted person you have now the honor to address, little as ye guess it."

"Why, what has come to you?" I demanded.

"What you'll never credit—what I couldn't credit mesilf till I'd heard it a dozen times and more," he assured me. "My uncle's gone, and may God rest his soul and forgive him for all the hard thoughts he ever had of me—he was right in some of them I'm fearing—and pardon me for all the hard words I've ever said of him—and some of those were gospel truth too!" He crossed himself piously as a conclusion to this strange petition: "'Twas a clear act of Providence, no less! Oh, 'tis as true as gospel, Sir John. I've gold to throw to the birds if I choose—but I'll not, I'll throw it at Madonna Francesca's little feet instead. Do you comprehend? 'Tis myself can make her my Lady O'Meara now, whenever she ceases to torment me and makes me the happiest man the sun shines on!"

Again I wrung his hands, with warm words of pleasure and congratulation. "But I thought, Michael, that Madonna Francesca had ceased long ago to torture you," I said slyly, with a glance at that blushing witch.

"Bedad, and that's what I tell her!" cried the Irishman. "But she has the grand air of one who remembers nothing! She flouts me, she that threw herself in my arms that night, never waiting to be properly entreated! Tell me this now, what cause had

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she to guess I wanted her pretty arms stealing about my neck, that she dared to risk that same——"

"Oh!" Francesca cried indignantly. "You are very brutal, Messer O'Meara, and very foolish as well! It was only fright that made me do so, and I will never wed you, never, never——"

"Sure and you will, mavourneen," he blarneyed, going closer to her, "when you know that should you do anything else I'd go mad entirely, no less! My heart's under those pretty feet of yours—not an instant of happiness do I know save in the light of your eyes—come, be merciful, now, or I'll be after dying before your sight!"

She smiled shyly, showing two deep dimples that might well have maddened a colder man than O'Meara. "Do you hold me so dear, indeed, indeed, Messer Michele?" she murmured, struggling hard with the name of Michael, a word ill adapted to Italian lips. His arm went around her, and she swayed toward him. I turned away. In the distance I caught the flutter of a dress; no doubt it was the Princess. I would go find her.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE PRINCESS ASKS A FAVOR

GLAD as I was of Michael's happiness, it seemed to throw into sharp contrast my own loneliness and the hopelessness of my love. The perfumed breeze swept across my face, the birds sang merrily, the odor of flowers rose all about me, but there was pain at my heart and a dead weight of suffering on my spirit.

"Sir John Hawkwood! Is it you?"

Before me, among the roses and the lilies, stood the Princess. She wore a dress of pale golden brocade belted and broidered with great sapphires, and there were jewels on her neck and in her dusky hair. Her fingers were full of a great mass of crimson flowers, over which a huge butterfly hovered longingly, waving its gaudy wings. She was beautiful beyond all sights that I had ever seen, and her face, upturned to mine, stole away all my strength and left me weak and silent, staring at her as a worshiper gazes at a niched saint.

There was a new charm clinging all about her, a look of youth and happiness, and the smile that curved her scarlet mouth spoke all of sweetness, not at all of the pride and disdain that had so often marred her beauty. "You have come, Sir John! You have come at last, and you have no more to fear from Antonio della Scala!" she said joyously, and held out both her hands.

I knelt and kissed them, finding no words. She was welcoming me with all graciousness, greeting me with such favor as I had never dared to look for, yet I felt further from her than on the day when I had first spoken to her in the Prince's *loggia*, and she had scorned and mocked me and refused to listen to my warning. My eyes turned on her again as I let her hands go, and I caught my breath sharply for very pain. She stood here in the garden of the Duke of Padua, whose ward and kinswoman she was; her rich dress, her jewels, the flowers and marble that framed her bright figure—all these things were her proper setting. What was mine? The camp, or the tavern, or a wild and bloody battle, but never a palace! She was the Princess Giulia; I was Sir John Hawkwood, a mercenary and a leader of free companions. I would do well to leave her as soon as might be, and never again to approach one so far above me.

"You have seen the Duke?" she was asking eagerly. "You have had speech with him, Sir John?"

"Yes, Madonna Giulia."

"And he has offered you service, and his favor?"

"Yes, Princess." I could say no more. Her beauty, her radiant kindness, her sweet words all seemed to make my case but the more hopeless. Even this show of favor, I told myself savagely, was but the graciousness of one too proud not to requite the service done by a man far below her.

"It gives me joy to see you here, Sir John," she said, her voice trembling. "While you lay in Antonio's hands, while I knew that your life was imperiled for your kindness to me—ah, I had little pleasure then! Had you paid so dearly for my saving, I think I would never have known peace again."

The trees rustled softly in the scented wind. At my feet lay the scarlet flowers that Madonna Giulia had dropped when I kissed her hands. The great butterfly floated down upon them, spread his wings, and began to draw out the honey.

"What is it, Sir John?" said the Princess, and I felt her hand laid lightly on my

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sleeve. "Is not all well with you? Why do you knit your brows and bite your lip?"

With an effort I gathered myself up and faced her as bravely as might be. "All is indeed well with me," I cried, "if I find you well and happy, Princess. Come, tell me, will you find Padua as fair a home as Verona was?"

She bowed her head. "I breathe freely for the first time in many years," she answered. "In that bloody court of my cousin's I lived in terror, though my pride made me conceal it from all the world. It is an evil dream to me now, yet a dream I do not regret, for without it I had never known the bravest knight that ever served lady." She smiled on me in a sweet fashion that well-nigh wrung a groan from my lips. "I am happy here, Sir John. I find Duke Francesco a kind gentleman, a loving kinsman."

"THAT is well," I answered. "He will cherish you well, and wed you in the end to an Este or a Gonzaga, some great prince who will set you on a throne." My voice turned bitter on the words, and I scorned myself for the weakness.

She smiled wisely and shook her head. "So he said when first I came to him, but now he knows better," she murmured. Coming a step closer to me across the flowers, she looked up into my eyes. "I have learned a great deal in a little time, Sir John," she said softly. "A month ago I was a proud, hard girl, vain of my rank, scornful of all the world save the few that had crowns upon their brows. But to-day I am different. I have learned that royal blood is a poor thing if not backed by a noble nature. Which bore himself in the more knightly fashion toward me, Sir John Hawkwood who is of poor birth, or Antonio della Scala who is the last of a great line of rulers? I have learned a great deal. If ever I wed, it will not be for place or for power, but for love!"

My breath came fast as I looked across the brilliant garden. "May you have love and power too, and all other blessings," I said, my voice shaking. "I shall pray always for that, Madonna Giulia."

Her lustrous dark eyes were still smiling into mine, stealing away my strength. "The love would be enough, Sir John—without the place—without the power," she said softly.

"Then thrice happy the man to whom you will some day give your love," I said, wondering for how long I could find strength to meet her smiling gaze.

She glanced down at the gaudy butterfly on the bright flowers. "Do you remember, Sir John," she asked, in a low voice, "what you told me in Castel Paura concerning a dream of yours? You dreamed that if I loved enough I might find strength to lay aside my rank and wealth, to put off my pride of blood like a worn garment, to face poverty boldly and laugh at it so long as the man I loved stood by my side——"

She broke off, and I stood speechless, my heart twisted by the memory that her words had called up. Why did she hurt me now by speaking of what could never be?

"Ah," she cried suddenly and sharply, her hand falling from my sleeve as she swayed away, "you are unkind, Sir John! You shame me. Will you not help me ever so little, then?"

"Help you, Madonna Giulia?" I cried, amazed, but very eager now. 'Do you mean that there is something I may yet do for your service? Tell me then, for on my honor I had never hoped for such happiness as to aid you once more——"

"Yes, there is something you may do to serve me," she said. She turned her face up to mine again, and I saw tears in her eyes and laughter on her lips. "You may marry me, Sir John Hawkwood!" she murmured, in a wonderful voice unlike any sound that had ever reached my ears. "You may marry me, if your love has not died since last you told me of it!"

For an instant I stared at her like one gone mad. A great joy swept over me, an exaltation and triumph such as I had never known could exist on earth. The beating of my heart grew faster and faster until it hurt me. "You love me?" I muttered. "You love me?"

She dropped her eyes. Into her cheeks crept a soft warm flush, and her lips trembled strangely. "Yes, Sir John. Yes, I love you!"

I could not move hand or foot; a spell seemed to bind me and keep me gazing at her beautiful lowered head. "Since when?" I heard myself say. "Since when? Since the days in Castel Paura?"

"Before that," she murmured, so low that I could scarce catch the words.

"What," I cried, "did you love me when I seized you and carried you away?"

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"Before that," she whispered.

"On the day when I spoke to you in the Prince's *loggia* to warn you of the plot?" I did not know my own voice now.

SHE looked at me once more, her eyes swimming with tears and laughter. "I loved you from the time when first you came to Verona, my knight!" she told me bravely. "I loved you when I saw you march through the streets with your Company. I hung from the window to watch you, and dreamed afterward of your face, and when you passed me in the palace my heart leaped at sound of your step. But I was hard and proud, and scorned all who were not royal; and I heard many evil tales of you, and despised myself that I could not tear the thought of you from my mind. I was angered against you until at times I believed my heart was full of hate. Yet through it all I loved you. I loved you when I spoke most cruelly to you, I loved you when I despised you most for the tales I heard of your life—I loved you when, mad with rage because I thought you had carried me off to sell me to the Duke, I would have stabbed you there in the castle. I have been proud and wayward and cruel, but if you will forgive me—if you will let me be your wife, Sir John—I will be very obedient and very true; I will teach you that I am not all ungrateful——"

I flung out my arms to gather her to me, then dropped them with a groan. "It can not be, Giulia!" I cried hoarsely. "I can not wrong you by taking you to wife! You are a Princess, a lady of royal blood and great possessions——"

"I have very little now," she answered, smiling as if lands and gold were nothing. "Antonio has all my inheritance in his grasp. I will come to you very poor—you will be generous to wed so undowered a bride."

"I am to march against Antonio!" I answered desperately. I had never fought so hard a battle as this one in all my days; I had never feared a sword as I feared the light of her tender eyes. "Duke Francesco and I will get you back your lands, and you will be rich again——"

"Then Duke Francesco shall add them to his possessions," she cried, with the gesture of one who tosses away a thing of little worth. "I have told him that he may keep as much of my inheritance as it pleases him. As for me, I shall be content to have my husband's love."

"Giulia! Giulia!" I groaned. "You can not wed such a man as I! You are great, you are royal, and I am a tanner's son——"

"The more honor to you then, my dear lord, that you have a nature nobler than that of any king!" she answered, dropping me such a stately curtsy as she might have made to the Duke of Padua.

"I am a rough soldier," I cried. "I am a captain of mercenaries, a leader of free lances! I have been a bully and a cut-throat, a tavern loiterer, a street fighter——"

"You are a knight and a gentleman and a soldier!" she said, with her head high. "I shall never blush to wear your name—I am proud of you, and I love you!"

"It is madness!" I groaned. "It can not be——"

"I love you!" she said again. With a sudden graceful movement she fell on her knees on the flowery sward before me, turning up a tearful, laughing face full of such tender love-light as sapped my last strength away. "Will you wed me, Sir John Hawkwood?" she murmured. "Will you marry me? See, I am on my knees before you! If you are true chevalier and gallant knight you will never suffer a lady to humble herself in vain——"

"Giulia!" I cried, as I caught her to her feet and pressed her in my arms. "Giulia, my beloved!" And it seemed to me that the sun shone brighter and the wind blew softer and the flower-scent grew more rich and sweet as her lips met mine in the glory of our first kiss.

THE END

NOTE: The great English condottiere, Sir John Hawkwood, was in command of the Paduan forces at the battle of Castagnaro, on which occasion Antonio della Scala, the last ruler of the house of Scaligeri, was disastrously defeated and put to flight. Soon afterward this unfortunate Prince was forced to quit Verona in disguise and to seek a refuge at Venice, where after a short and unhappy exile he died. Verona fell into the hands of Francesco Carrara, Duke of Padua.

Sir John Hawkwood lived to a green old age, and died full of years and honors, leaving sons who later returned to England and there carried on the name of their famous father. He was deeply and sincerely mourned by many of those whom he had served, above all by the Republic of Florence, which accorded him a magnificent state funeral, and placed in its great cathedral an equestrian picture of the great soldier, which may be seen there to this day.

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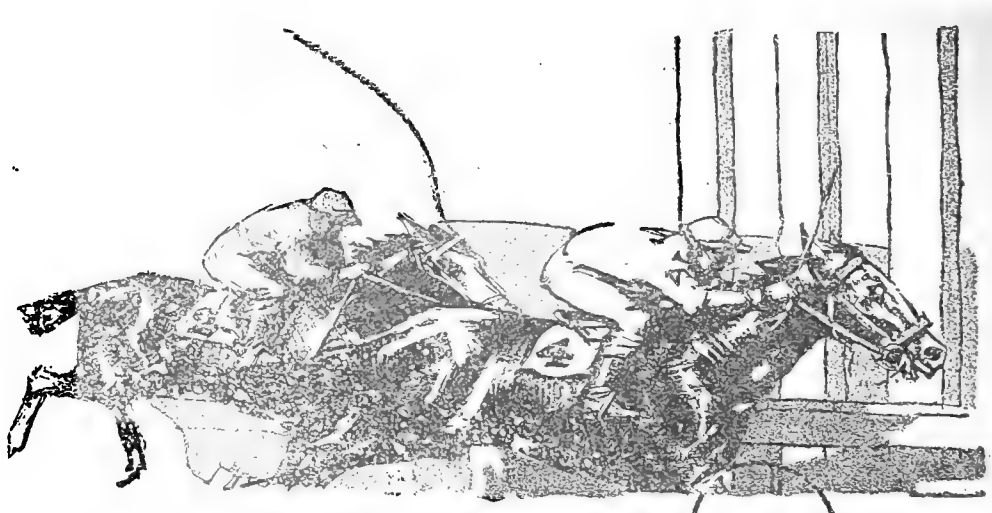

The PLANTERS' PLATE

by Theodore Goodridge Roberts

"HERE, you black swab! You git out o' my way!" cried Mr. Boyson, mate of the barkentine *Fortitude*.

"You talk to me, sah?" returned Mr. Reginald Newsam with dignity. "I'll hab you understand I'm a free-bo'n British object, sah!"

"You look the part! Git out!"

"You common, abstrusive sailorman, sah!"

Mr. Boyson, who was in a very bad humor, straightway kicked Mr. Newsam on the thin-clad right shin. Newsam bellowed, hopped into the air and turned to flee; but the mate clutched him by the collar of his linen jacket and began to baste the backs of his legs with a heavy but limber walking-stick. The seafarer was large and the negro was small.

Help came to the oppressed in the form of a slender young man clothed in spotless linen and wearing a monocle in his right eye.

"Stop that! Leave the fellow alone!" commanded the newcomer.

"You shut up! This ain't *your* funeral, I reckon!" retorted Mr. Boyson.

"Pardon me, but that man is my servant," returned the other coolly.

The sailor maintained his grip on Reginald's collar but ceased the application of the stick.

"Yes, sah! I am this gentleman's valet de chambah, sah!" cried Newsam.

"——! I didn't know you had automo*biles* on this forsaken island!" exclaimed Mr. Boyson in frank disgust.

He released the squirming negro and stalked off to where the gig of the *Fortitude* awaited him at the foot of the water-stairs. He was relieved to feel that in his passage with Mr. Newsam he had rid himself of much of his bad humor.

"Give 'way!" he growled, and lit a cigar.

Bill Spike and Sandy McKay bent their backs to the oars and so pulled Mr. Boyson out to his ship and out of my story.

In the meantime the young man with the single eyeglass had turned, without so much as a word or a glance for Mr. Reginald Newsam, and walked up a narrow street leading from the carcenage to Nelson Square and the Planters' Club. Mr. Newsam strutted after him, about five paces

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in the rear. Mr. Newsam's feet were bare, but his cotton trousers were turned up to a fashionable height, in the fingers of his right hand he twiddled a switch of yellow bamboo, his linen tunic was clean though somewhat crumpled about the collar, and around and around the crown of his battered hat he wore a *puggaree* of blue silk. At the club the young man with the eyeglass turned and beheld his follower.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed. "What do *you* want?"

Reginald stood at attention.

"Youh servant, sah."

"Ah! So you are the boy who got your hide warmed, are you?"

"The same, sah. You claimed me for youh servant, and I presumed to agree with you, Captain Lavendeh, sah."

"So you know me?"

"What gentleman in 'Bados, white or otherwise, sah, does not know Captain Lavendeh, sah?"

A smile flickered for a moment upon Captain Lavender's thin, melancholy young face. "I am sorry that I was forced to tell a lie as the easiest way of saving you from that big bully," he said.

"Excuse me, sah," returned Newsam, "but I can't accept that statement, sah. Captain Lavendeh never told a lie in his life!"

Again the quick, faint smile lit the other's face. "What had you done to that seafaring person to excite him to such violence?" he asked, with a searching glance.

"'Pon my soul, sah, I didn't do a thing to him!" protested Reginald. "That seafaring gentleman was laboring undeh the happy delusions ob rum when it was red, sah. He shouted at me in a very unbred manneh, sah."

Lavender nodded. He was satisfied that Newsam told the truth.

"Do you know anything about horses?" he asked suddenly.

"Well, sah, I must admit I am mo' conversant with mules," replied Reginald, twirling his hat in his hands.

"Can you ride?"

"Like Jehu ob old, sah."

"I expect to get home—to Mahogany Hill, you know—by nine o'clock to-night, and if I find you there I'll talk the matter of employment over with you," said the Captain. "Perhaps I can give you work. I want a man with plenty of nerve."

Mr. Reginald Newsam bowed.

"Thank you, sah. I am honest, sah, and chock-full ob nerves."

II

CAPTAIN LAVENDER found the reading-room of the club unoccupied save by the trade-wind. He pulled a deep chair to an open window and sat with his face toward the wind and the topmasts of a barkentine etched against the blue-gold sky. Things were nearing a crisis in the life and affairs of Captain J. F. Lavender. He reviewed his past. He glanced at the care-free days at Sandhurst and later with the Buffs. Again he trembled (who had never flinched in battle) at the sudden shadow of ill health. He lived again through that notable interview with the great London doctor, and through the sunderings of ambitions and old ties that had followed. Again he settled his affairs, made the voyage from Southampton to 'Bados, invested all of his modest fortune in the little estate of Mahogany Hill and set to work to master the science of cane and banana culture.

His reflections brightened as they came to the days of returning health and then to the wonderful day of his first meeting with Cora Mansard. But again they darkened as his mind dwelt upon Cora's father, the owner and occupier of the largest plantation on the island. William Varney Mansard's bumptious pride was a thing to laugh at—unless one happened to be at once poor and desperately in love with Mansard's daughter. It was this way with Captain James Fairfield Lavender!

Lavender had not ridden over to Admiral's Pride once in the past three weeks. The owners of big Admiral's Pride and little Mahogany Hill had come to open warfare at last. The Captain had been served with more bumptiousness than he could swallow and so had handed some of it back to the server. The break had followed a long, one-voiced, overbearing argument and a purse-proud wager offered and accepted. Mansard had taken the acceptance of the wager as a direct insult.

Lavender smiled grimly as he thought of the bet. He moved to a writing-table between two open windows and, after fif-

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teen minutes of intense application, accomplished the following:

To WILLIAM VARNEY MANSARD, Esquire, J. P.,
Admiral's Pride,

DEAR SIR:

I write to remind you of the wager laid by you, and taken up by me, two weeks ago. It was five thousand pounds against two thousand that no horse at present registered in this island, and ridden by a native of this island not of white blood, could beat a horse from your stables ridden by Bent, your white jockey, in the race for the Planters' Plate which is to be run on December the 26th next. Kindly let me know, by return, if my statement of particulars is correct and if the wager still stands. Upon receipt of confirmation of above I shall place negotiable paper to the amount of two thousand pounds in the hands of Mr. Trevor of Mount Gay, value of said paper to be guaranteed by Mr. Bell of the West Indian Bank. I intend to enter a horse of my own for the Planters' Plate, with a black boy up.

I remain, yours faithfully
J. F. LAVENDER.

"Two thousand cleans me out," he reflected. "Doubtless, I am a fool. If I drop it, then the jig is up! It will be farewell to Cora—farewell to 'Bados and health—and a scramble for a suicidal appointment on the Gold Coast!"

He went out and posted the fateful letter with his own hand. He returned to the club and to the deep chair that faced the open window.

"On the other hand," he murmured, completing his argument, "if I pull off the five thousand there'll be no holding me. I'll be married to Cora within a month—and the —— take Bumptious Billyum!"

Bumptious Billyum was the name by which the proprietor of Admiral's Pride was commonly known in the island.

It was about ten o'clock when Lavender drew rein in front of his house. A figure in white appeared at the pony's head.

"Here I am, Captain Lavendeh, sah," said Reginald Newsam.

They entered the lighted sitting-room of the bungalow.

"So you want work, Newsam?" queried the Captain.

"Yes, sah; but not field-work, sah."

"Why not field-work?"

"I am engaged to marry a young lady, sah, ob a very particulah family. Her father is a foreman-coopeh, sah, and he says she can't marry a gentleman ob inferioh social position, sah."

Captain Lavender smiled to find in Newsam's case a hint of similarity to his own. Bumptious Billyum did not want Cora to marry a poor gentleman, and the black foreman-cooper did not want his daughter to marry a field-hand. Yes, Lavender and Newsam stood in much the same position toward the respective fathers.

"How would the position of jockey in my employment rank in your social scale?" asked the Captain gravely.

"Very high, sah! At the top ob the tree, sah!" replied Newsam, his eyes rolling with excitement.

"I will give you a week's trial. We begin work at five o'clock to-morrow morning. You can sleep to-night on the cot in the gallery," said the Captain.

As Lavender had hoped and expected, the new boy proved himself the possessor of a firm seat and light, clever hands. Also, he treated the horses with tact and had the trick of ingratiating himself with them. So far, good! But the planter looked for more than these things and held serious tests in reserve.

The expected communication arrived from Admiral's Pride.

"Well, it's neck or nothing!" said Lavender, grimly. "All against five thousand! White Star is good for it—but what about the jockey?"

ON THE third morning of Newsam's trial that promising youth and his master had a short brush, the boy mounted on White Star and Lavender on a serviceable plug named Boxer. White Star was the better horse, but Lavender won the race by half a length. The riders dismounted.

"Why did you let me pass?" inquired the Captain, his voice quiet but his thin face flushed.

"You jockeyed me, sah," replied Newsam. "You shouldehed me out, sah. I had to pull away or come a croppeh, sah!"

"But White Star is the stronger and cleverer horse! Boxer could not throw him off his feet."

"He could with you up, sah. No black boy can ride straight, sah, when a white gentleman pulls his hawse ober against him, sah."

"He can if he has the courage to try. All he needs is nerve!"

"I can ride against any black boy on the island, sah, but——"

Captain Lavender silenced him with a glance.

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"Do you intend to let the jockey from Admiral's Pride shoulder White Star into second place when you ride in the Planters' Plate?" he asked.

The rich chocolate hue of Newsam's visage faded to a heavy, lifeless gray. His eyes rolled, flashing expanses of white.

"Mistah Bent will do what you did, sah," he stammered. "He will come home first and White Star and me second, sah."

"Why?"

"He is surely a white man, sah—and—"

"Bless my soul, Newsam, where is your pride? Where is your pride as a jockey? White Star is the best horse and is in the pink of condition, and you are a tip-top rider. What is the trouble?"

"I'm no good when it comes to jostling with a white man, sah. Mistah Bent is a dangerous character, sah. He would shouldeh the king—if the king was a black gentleman, sah—into second place! But if you ride White Star in that race, Captain Lavender, we'll win it, sah."

"It is a strictly professional race—and there are other reasons why you must ride it. Do you know what will happen to me, Newsam, if you do not win against Bent in the Planters' Plate?"

"No, sah."

"Mr. Mansard will become the owner of Mahogany Hill, of White Star and the other horses, of the mules, the horned-cattle and the crops and of what little money I have in the bank, and I will have to go away from 'Bados forever and try to get a job in the army again."

"Lohd save us, sah!"

"But if you win that race, then I'll buy more land, more horses and more mules."

"Yes, sah."

"And I'll marry Miss Mansard."

"Praise the Lohd, sah!"

"And I'll give you a job for life and two hundred pounds to start housekeeping on."

Mr. Newsam was overpowered. He could do nothing but roll his eyes.

"But if you lose that race, then I'm a beggar! Ruined! I'll never set eyes on Miss Mansard again and—and ten to one I'll die of fever on the Gold Coast."

"I'll try, sah!" cried Newsam. "It will surely turn my heart to jelly, sah—but I'll shut my eyes and let heh rip, sah!"

"No, you must not shut your eyes when you see Bent jockeying across at you! Keep them wide open and ride straight, and remember that White Star is the best horse that was ever foaled or registered in this island!"

AFTER dinner that evening Captain Lavender rode away on Boxer. The moon was big and round and tinted like a pearl. A gentle but steady wind murmured in the mahoganies and mangoes, whispered in the canes and occasionally struck a harsher note in the high, stiff banners of roadside palms. Boxer's hoofs rang out sharply on the white road. So a couple of miles were passed, and then Lavender put his horse across the ditch and on to the soft, black mold between rows of sugar-canes. Beyond the canes they passed over a hill of close-nibbled pasture, and beyond that they entered a wood. The Captain dismounted, fastened Boxer to a tree and went forward on foot. He soon found a narrow path and, ten minutes later, he entered the rose-garden of Admiral's Pride. Cora was there, awaiting him alone, as it had been arranged by secret messenger.

They sat on a stone bench under a flambeau tree and for a little while felt no requirement for speech. Presently the girl began to ask questions, for she had heard her father and a guest laughing over the amazing wager. Lavender answered honestly by stating his case and his gnawing fear. He had to assure her that he could not possibly back out of the agreement, even if he should want to.

"Win or lose, I mean to marry you," she said.

"But I shall be an absolute pauper!" he replied.

"That would be rather awkward—so let us think of a way of winning the race and so starting our married life in comfortable circumstances!" she returned dauntlessly. And then, "Newsam is good enough, isn't he, if he only thought so?"

"Yes, dear. He is a wonder at riding."

"I have noticed that his hair is quite straight."

"Yes. Carib blood, I suppose."

"Nonsense, Jim! You lack imagination. His ancestors came from Africa in a slave-ship, didn't they?"

"Some of them, no doubt. But what have his ancestors, Carib or African, to do with the race, dear?"

"Nothing. Now listen to me, Jim."

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She leaned close to him and whispered into his ear, hurriedly and enthusiastically, for several minutes.

"Heavens, dear! What on earth are you driving at?" he exclaimed.

She sighed, then fell to whispering again.

"You precious little chump! Do you expect me to swallow that?" he cried.

"No; but I expect Reginald Newsam to swallow it."

Lavender stared, grinned, then sighed profoundly.

"Cora, you are a wonder!" he said.

Half a minute later, the voice of Bumptious Billyum came booming across the roses and the moonlight.

"Daughter! Daughter! Where are you, my dear child?"

Ten minutes later Captain Lavender unhitched Boxer and rode over the hill and in among the whispering canes. His eyes were fixed straight ahead and he smiled. Ever and anon he sighed ecstatically. For a little while Newsam, White Star, the Planters' Plate and Bumptious Billyum were all alike forgotten. Thought of Cora, the heart of the world, filled him like a divine, unsearing flame, and the husk of the world lay unheeded beneath the hoofs of his horse. But, alas, this was so only for a little while. Then anxiety, his familiar companion, swung up behind him again.

Next morning the Captain called his jockey aside, out of earshot of the grooms, and talked to him with imposing solemnity for a long time. At first Newsam looked dazed, delighted and doubtful. At last a grin of proud conviction, aglow with wonder, gashed his dusky face.

III

CHRISTMAS DAY passed quietly at Mahogany Hill. As far as the master and Reginald Newsam were concerned, the festal bowl did not flow, nor the festal board groan, with the traditional fare of the season. The first race was timed for three o'clock on the afternoon of the twenty-sixth. White Star and Boxer were moved in to the Race Club stables in the cool of the morning, accompanied by the Captain, Newsam and two grooms. Within the next two hours twenty horses and ponies arrived from all parts of the island. Four came from Admiral's Pride—one for each race. Captain Lavender left the savanna only long enough to breakfast at a near-by hotel. He felt nervous, though he looked eminently calm. He kept a close watch on Newsam; but as the jockey persisted in spending the entire morning in the open box with White Star this proved to be neither a difficult nor interesting task.

Luncheon was served in the pavilion. Soon after that the public began to arrive and the grandstand filled with Government officials, planters and merchants and their families. Cora and the Captain exchanged glances through their glasses. The girl wore a bow of pink and green on the breast of her white gown and her face was radiant. Noting these things, Lavender's heart went up. He trusted implicitly in Cora's judgment of men and horses.

The first race was uneventful. It was a gentlemen's race; and Mr. Dawlish won it with young Bob Mansard second, and Lavender, on Boxer, third. Every one could see that Lavender was saving his horse. The second race, a free-for-all, was won by a bay mare from Admiral's Pride, with a black boy up. The next event, open to half-bred horses and all sorts and conditions of riders, was captured by Boxer with the Captain in the saddle, Mr. Mansard's Rockaway, with Bent up, being beaten by a half-length after an exciting brush. Lavender was heartily cheered by the spectators of all shades. Leaving Boxer with the grooms, he hurried to White Star's box and Reginald Newsam. Reginald had followed the race from the roof of the box, with the aid of his master's glasses.

"That is how you are to ride White Star," said the Captain.

"Yes, sah. I followed ebery foot of it."

"When Bent looked like shouldering across at me I kept straight and put on top speed—every ounce."

"Yes, sah. I made a note ob that, sah."

"And Bent eased off. He's a bluffer!"

"Don't you fret, Captain Lavendeh, sah," returned Reginald cheerfully. "Let him bluff or let him shouldeh, he can't scare me, sah!"

The Planters' Plate was the race of the day—the race of the year. For the past three seasons it had been won by a horse from Admiral's Pride ridden by Bent. It was generally acknowledged that the best horse had not always won. Bent was the only white professional rider in the island.

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That explained the matter fully to all those who were familiar with the spirit of its colored population.

Eight horses started; and all, with the exception of Mansard's Hussar, carried black riders. The betting was almost entirely confined to Lavender's White Star, Burton's Nixie, Dawlish's Irish Girl and Trevor's Bottle Boy for second and third positions. The speculating public left first place and Hussar carefully out of the question. No terms were favorable enough to tempt the placing of any money against the English jockey.

Hussar was a thoroughbred, though foaled in the island, six years old, cleanly but strongly built and bright chestnut in color. White Star was four years old and this was his second appearance on the course. As a three-year-old he had won a free-for-all event the year before. Now he was a bigger horse and a better. Mouth, temper and coat were all like velvet. Lavender had purchased him from the Mount Gay stables two years before and had attended personally to his education. White Star's dam had been a racing thoroughbred and his sire a notable half-bred hunter and steeplechaser in Leicestershire. The four-year-old was dark bay with a snowy star on his forehead.

Mr. Dawlish's little mare jumped off in the lead. Soon Bottle Boy drew after her out of the bunch. The bunch lengthened and thinned until it ceased to be a bunch at all. Hussar drifted abreast of the little mare, with Bent, flaming in his gold and crimson jacket and ruddy face, sitting as still as a man of wood. The mare was working along like a motor-boat, but the big horse seemed to be sailing like an aeroplane. A second later, White Star came to even terms with Bottle Boy.

At this stage of the proceedings a scuffling and shouting arose from a group of colored sportsmen at the west end of the grandstand. The diversion was caused by a highly respected and slightly intoxicated foreman cooper offering even money on White Star for the Plate. He loudly maintained that he himself had taught Mr. Reginald Newsam the science and art of equitation and that the distinguished young jockey was already as good as a member of his family. Though his first statement was doubted, his money did not go begging.

The field swept past the grandstand. Hussar led, running as smoothly as if on wheels, Bent quiet and unconcerned, a slight smile on his thin lips, hands well down and motionless and both heels passive. Four lengths behind came White Star, traveling at a hearty clip with a contemplative eye on the chestnut in front. Newsam was not holding him, neither was he urging him. He, too, was motionless from the crown of his pink and green cap to the fanged heels of his boots, but his shining face was gashed by a broad and cheerful smile. It was evident that both horse and boy were enjoying the race, and that both took a healthy interest in the man and horse in front. Then passed the little mare and Bottle Boy, neck and neck, whiphands twitching and an exchange of compliments flying.

So the field passed to a quaking, pounding tumult of hoofs, a swishing of whips, in swirls of white dust and flashes of many colors. Once passed, to the watchers in and about the grandstand it looked as if all the horses had been suddenly drawn close together again and hurled forward in a sweltering mass.

A SHOUT went up that set the sunlight vibrating, that rang out across the savanna, beyond the stalwart mahoganies and slender cocoanut trees to where the little fishing-boats drifted inside the reefs of coral. The race swung around a corner, lengthening suddenly to a ragged procession of grouped and single riders to the eyes of the spectators. Leading that flashing string slid a blotch of gold and crimson atop a flying streak of chestnut; and, as if a part and continuation of the same wonderful creation of speed, slid a blotch of pink and green atop a flying streak of bay. The shout soared up again. Lavender's black boy was riding for the Plate! In his first race he was riding for it, hands down, eyes open!—but heaven help him when he should draw alongside of Peter Bent!

Captain Lavender polished the lenses of his glasses, nervously rubbed his eyes and looked again. He felt a dry lump in his throat and a tightness across his chest. For a second the glasses shook in his trembling hands; and then they steadied, found Newsam's rushing, eager face and hunched shoulders and followed and held them. The Captain saw the flash of the boy's white

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teeth, the glint of a wide eye, and that his lips moved freely and assuredly as if in measured and vigorous speech.

"What in thunder is he talking about?" muttered Lavender. "Ride, you young devil, ride—and keep your mouth shut!"

They came into the straight, trailed by white dust. Yes, Hussar and White Star were shoulder to shoulder now; and now the lips of Reginald Newsam were steady and expanded in a wide, undaunted smile. The sunlight above the sweltering savanna shook with the continuous roar from thousands of throats. They were near by now and close together, hurtling homeward neck and neck. Suddenly, quick as light, Peter Bent's slim whip flickered up and down. To the sting of it the chestnut gained a head—and in the same instant of time, yanked over by that unscrupulous and masterful hand, he swung inward against White Star's flying shoulder. Newsam jolted in his saddle and uttered a yell of derision. White Star staggered, changed feet and settled onward to victory. Hussar reeled, plunged to his knees and sent the redoubtable Peter Bent over his bowed head like a shot rabbit.

"We win! Cora wins, God bless her!" cried Captain Lavender hysterically.

He rushed forward and laid one hand on White Star's sweating neck and the other on Reginald Newsam's knee.

"I gib Mistah Bent fair warning, sah," cried the boy breathlessly. "I told him, sah, over yondah, that I wasn't no ordinary-bred boy to shouldeh into, sah. I told him how I wasn't ordinary black African nor yet black Carib, but Arab blood like White Star himself, Captain Lavendeh, sah—I told him just what you told me, sah, and Miss Cora told you, sah—like gentleman to gentleman—how in the old days the Arab slave-hunters sometimes got feeling bad-tempered with each other, sah, an' shipped their own blood relatives away to the new lands for slaves—and how I was come down from one ob them Arabs, sah, which is a simple mattah of history, sah—just as you told me, Captain Lavendeh, sah. But Mistah Bent, he just curled up his nose, sah—and look at him now!"

"Arabia has saved my life!" said Captain Lavender fervently.

Turning, he blew a kiss up toward a certain corner of the grandstand.

McQuinn, Sheriff

by William Tillinghast Eldridge

McQUINN slipped his revolver into his pocket and arose to his full six-feet-two—long, lank and angular. His thin, clean-shaven face bore a quiet, placid look of determination.

"I'll go alone," he remarked in a low-voiced drawl.

"The boys will be after him," ventured one of the men.

"Sure," agreed McQuinn, and he moved toward the door.

The Deputy Sheriff leaned forward with a troubled frown. "You better take some of us, Mac. Alone, you can't stop 'em if they try to take him."

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McQuinn turned with his hand on the knob. His broad shoulders blotted out the dark panels; on his lips was a plaintive smile and in his patient gray eyes a touch of loss and sadness. He was always very even in voice and actions when facing a dangerous line of duty, and the men watching him understood, especially, the drawn lines about his nostrils. "You go down and telegraph the Governor for a company of State troops!"

The Deputy Sheriff smiled, but the parted lips bore no trace of mirth. "If the boys get the cuss, there won't be any need for the troops, Mac."

"I'm going to get him first," replied McQuinn, and he opened the door.

The Deputy Sheriff stepped across the room, still bent on stopping his chief if possible. "If you do, they'll take him away from you," he urged.

McQuinn smiled as he turned to look back an instant, but the smile no more than touched his thin lips when it faded. "If they do that, Jack——" he held out his hand and then he was gone, out into the night with slow, shuffling steps.

His shoulders were bent and, generally, he had the listless, tired movements of a man more than burdened by his troubles, or possibly one who was growing tired of life and to whom the vista ahead bore no touch of light.

And perhaps it was so with McQuinn. Yet inwardly he was fully aware of the fact that his blood throbbed like checked engines and that the spirit of lawlessness, which had started more than half the town man-hunting, needed little to break through his listless attitude.

But McQuinn's poise was not unnatural, as much as he fought to hold himself in check and as much as his manner helped. He always went at a job in this slow, deliberate, don't-care way, but as he moved, bent awkwardly, long arms hanging limp, his eyes—pale gray and washed out—were searching each cross street with a sharp penetrating glance. The news of the brutal murder at the Perrin farm had reached McQuinn less than half an hour before, but in that brief time he had caught the pulse of the roused town with a full realization of what he had to face.

He had received a vague description of the murderer, brought by the farmer who had ridden in with the news, and he half suspected he knew the man. In the few minutes during which he had deliberated on his course of action, he had learned of the hurried gathering of the mob, he had even heard the sharp clatter of horsemen as they galloped past the jail and rode out of town to add themselves to the momentarily increasing crowd bent on first-hand vengeance.

Even now, down a side street, he heard the sharp beating of hoofs, and he knew that the quick metallic clatter meant that one more man was off for the little farm. The mob thought alone of vengeance; McQuinn—at the moment—of his oath and what the law expected of him. There were other things he might have considered—the white-faced woman dead in her home, but he refused to allow his mind to harbor anything but the one idea—the murderer must be caught before the mob got him, and be safely housed behind the heavy doors of the jail. To face the angry men crying out for vengeance and attempt to persuade them to allow him to swear in a posse would be only a waste of time. Strategy was needed, and while McQuinn gave no appearance of capability along that line, he went at his task with full confidence.

Two—Perrin and his wife—had passed beyond help, so the excited farmer's story had run, and it was up to him, Sheriff of the county, to see that another life was not sacrificed. The good name of the town needed his protection.

McQUINN went on, not toward the open country, the way the dying hoofbeats led, but into the lower part of the town, until finally he paused before the door of a rambling one-story saloon.

He went in quickly. The man behind the bar glanced up and a faint touch of color flooded his pale, plastic face for an instant.

"How are you, Sheriff?" he nodded.

McQuinn inclined his head and leaned deliberately against the bar. "Tell me just what this fellow looks like, Sam," he suggested in a low, even voice.

The bartender, the owner of the place, one of the lowest and dirtiest dens in the whole town, turned white. "Who do you mean, Sheriff?"

"The chap that's been hanging around here for the last week."

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"Did *he* do it?"

"I don't know, Sam, I don't know," drawled McQuinn, "but talk, I ain't got much time. I've got to move quick."

"He's tall, with a black mustache, bristly-like, and he's got a scar on the temple. His hair is a little gray, and he wore an old blue serge suit."

"What's his name?"

"Bower."

"Did he say he knew the Perrins?"

"My ——, Sheriff, you don't think he did the murder, do you?" demanded the bartender, scrubbing the streaked bar with a trembling hand.

"I don't know, Sam, but Mrs. Perrin, before she went, she talked a mite—said what the fellow looked like. I sorter figured on this chap that has been staying with you, Sam."

"I don't know nothing about him, he just came——" faltered the bartender, for he thought of what might follow if the mob got the idea into their heads that the murderer was a friend of his. They might even decide he had had a hand in planning the crime.

McQuinn straightened. "I never yet dragged you in, Sam, not even in the Sewell affair," his voice was a little sharper in tone, "so you just better talk now, and do it quick. If I can get him before the boys do, I'll put him where he can't talk. But if they get him, he may say something—I don't know what, or some of them may recognize him as having hung around here for the last few days. There may even be some one in the crowd, when they see the fellow about to take the nearest pole, that will want to swear he's a friend of yours. They'd make kindlings out of the place. I ought to get him first."

The bartender swallowed hard and leaned across the bar. Up on the dingy and dirty wall a clock ticked solemnly; except for that, not a sound came to the ears of the two men.

"He came a week ago with a letter from a friend of mine. He didn't say much, but he asked about the Perrins an' I gathered that he'd known old man Perrin in Chicago once. He said he was goin' to get some money; I figured old man Perrin had owed him some for a long time."

McQuinn straightened and buttoned up his coat. "What were his plans, Sam?"

The bartender studied the Sheriff's thin and expressionless face for a second. He knew the other too well to think of trying to deceive him, and yet his natural desire to be true to one of his kind, no matter what that one had done, held him silent for an instant.

"You know, Sam, he's got to come to time to-day, or to-morrow, or next week. He can't get away. There may be *some* show for him if I find him first; at least he'll get a trial, and a trial," the Sheriff's gaze turned to the old clock on the wall, "means some time more of life. It may mean just a life sentence—that ain't my part. My part is to get him—*now!*" The last word was shot out, and McQuinn looked the bartender squarely in the eye.

"He said he was goin' to Delton and would send me what he owed me from there."

McQuinn studied the other for a full minute, and during that silence the clock on the wall seemed to tick with a solemn, deathlike cadence in the bartender's ears.

At last the Sheriff nodded; he felt that he had got the truth. "That means he would turn east. There's a stream that way—I dare say he thought of that stream. By the way, Sam, did he ever ask you how we handed out the law down this way?"

The bartender nodded. "We got talkin' about that one night and he did ask a lot of questions."

"Whether we used dogs or not?"

The bartender moved his head. By now the beads of perspiration were standing on his brow, and as McQuinn considered for an instant, to see whether he thought it worth while to put further questions, the man behind the bar leaned forward and plucked him by the sleeve.

"I didn't have no idea, Sheriff, that this was his game, but when I heard what had happened why I—I—suspected."

"So did I," agreed the Sheriff and, with the ghost of a smile for the white-faced man, he walked out into the street.

THE stoop was gone from his shoulders, his head seemed to sit more firmly on his thin neck and the shuffle no longer marked his footsteps. McQuinn's period of planning was gone; action now dominated him, and, with action ahead and plans made, he moved quickly, almost stealthily, as much like

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the panther ready to pounce upon its prey as like a human being.

Coming to his home, he passed quickly to the stable in the rear. In an instant he had flung saddles upon two horses, mounted one and set off down the road at a sharp gallop, leading the second. At the first fork he turned east.

He was certain of his course, figuring matters as he saw them. From the Perrin house the man had been seen to make off across the field in the gathering dusk. Already the mob would be on his trail. The Sheriff figured that the murderer would take to the river, a small, shallow stream that ran toward Delton, a village fifteen miles beyond. Down the stream the man would go far enough to throw the dogs off the scent, and then, if not hard pressed, he would take to the road, walk to Delton and there catch the early morning train.

The road that McQuinn was on crossed the river that ran past the Perrin house and he rode as hard as he could for the bridge. As his horse and the one that followed thundered over the planks he drew rein.

He looked down the tree-lined stream. Suddenly he remembered there was an old deserted barn on the river bank, a short distance from the bridge. If the man hadn't headed for Delton, but had followed the stream below the road, he might have taken refuge in the barn. There was even a chance that he was still coming down the stream, for the length of time in which the sheriff had been gathering his information and riding to the bridge was hardly long enough for any man on foot to travel the distance between the Perrin farm and the Delton road. The Sheriff glanced at his watch and reckoned the time. Then, without hesitancy, he turned into the bushes and rode through them toward the old barn.

He was going to take the chance of the man being in the barn already, or finally stopping there. He had made up his mind that if the fugitive had not reached the road to Delton ahead of him he would never take to it, with the distant blood-cry of the dogs on the night breeze.

A dozen rods from the old square building, McQuinn tied up the two horses. Slipping his revolver from his pocket, he approached from the rear. The back doors were closed and two long poles leaned against them. Keeping close to the side of the building, he started toward the river and had nearly reached the corner when, far away, the sharp, eager bay of a hound that had caught the scent came to his ears.

A troubled look flashed across his face, for that long drawn-out throat-call seemed to indicate that he was wrong. The man must have left the river. He listened an instant, his eyes alert, the stoop again in his shoulders, and then there came to his ears a new sound.

A pebble had rolled down the river bank, there was the sound of a step on the turf, a soft, squashy step, and the next instant a dark figure stood in a break of the trees and turned to look back up the stream.

McQuinn stepped close to the barn and flattened himself against the boards. The man turned, glanced at the building and came toward it quickly.

He stopped in front of it, and as he did so the sharp, eager cry of the dogs changed to a noisy, worried baying. They were again off the track.

The man moved nearer and nearer to where McQuinn crouched by the corner. A step farther, and the Sheriff's long lanky body shot forward, the wiry arms closed, and the fugitive was locked in an embrace that was like bands of steel about his body.

Startled as he was, the man tried to break away, strove to free his arms, pinned to his sides, while his bloodshot eyes glared into McQuinn's with a look that might have annihilated.

Slowly one of McQuinn's hands reached downward and the next instant he had yanked the revolver from the prisoner's pocket and dropped it on the turf. Not a word had been spoken. The man's struggles grew less and finally ceased, for his very breath was being choked out of him by the bearlike hug of those long corded arms that drew tighter and tighter. McQuinn watched his face in the faint light through the trees, and when he saw the man's mouth open and his eyes grow big he spoke:

"I'm the Sheriff; you're Bower. The boys are close on to you with the dogs, but we've got time to get back to town. I've two horses in the bushes. You're to mount one, I the other. No handcuffs, for we may meet some one, and if we do, you are a deputy, understand, and we have just ridden over from Delton. Now be quick; we've got to reach the road first. Do as I say, and I'll get you to jail safe."

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The controlling arms relaxed as quickly as they had pinioned the man, and like a flash McQuinn seized the pistol on the ground, thrust it into his pocket and raised his own.

"March!" he ordered.

The prisoner hesitated an instant—he needed wind, he wanted a second to grasp what had happened. And then he turned, cowed and beaten by the Sheriff's quick, certain manner of speech and action.

They reached the horses, mounted and turned through the trees toward the road. Nearer and nearer came the bay of the dogs, but suddenly they seemed to turn away. McQuinn drew rein and glanced at his prisoner.

The man understood the look. "I cut across the fields a couple of times, thinkin' I'd hit the road for Delton, but they was too close after me, and I turned back over the same track to the river."

McQuinn nodded. "The dogs are on one of those trails. If some of the boys don't come on ahead, we're safe. Here," he leaned over and passed the man a false beard, "slip that on. If we meet them and they recognize you, I couldn't stop them."

"But you're the Sheriff!" the man cried, fear suddenly laying its grip upon him. "You must save me!"

McQuinn looked at his prisoner an instant, started to speak, shut his mouth with a snap and motioned the other on.

THEY came to the road, crossed the bridge and started toward the town. Up the river they could hear the dogs, flickering lights danced across the fields, and then out of the dark shadows of the hillside a dozen mounted men popped up and came sweeping down toward the bridge at a wild gallop.

The prisoner's glance narrowed and he raised the reins.

"Ride slow, you fool!" the Sheriff hissed.

"They are coming the other way, too!" choked out the man.

McQuinn nodded as from the direction of the town came the sharp hoof-beats of galloping horsemen.

"Sit up straight!" growled McQuinn, and the next instant half a dozen men pulled rein with a clatter of flying pebbles from the feet of their sweating, snorting horses.

"You, McQuinn?" shouted the first horseman.

"Yes, what's wrong?"

"Where have you been?" came the quick demand.

"I'm coming from Delton way, George," remarked McQuinn easily. "What's up? Who's got the dogs out?"

"Who's that with you?"

"Friend of mine from Delton way," responded the Sheriff, glancing from one to the other, "but say, boys, what's up?"

One of the riders drew alongside McQuinn, while the others trotted by to join the men who had crossed the field and were detouring on the road to Delton.

"You—you—better go up to the Perrins', Mac," rejoined the rider, not unkindly. "Your sister wants to see you."

"Mrs. Perrin?" McQuinn's voice held even.

"Yes," faltered the man. "Your brother-in-law ain't very well."

"All right," muttered McQuinn as the rider swung his horse to one side with a nod, "but first I've got to stop at the jail."

The white-faced prisoner paled suddenly to a sickly yellow shade as the truth flashed over him.

"You're——" he faltered, and his dry lips failed him.

McQuinn looked at him, and the moon, coming out from behind a heavy cloud, touched his light gray eyes. In their depth there seemed greater depths; in his face, a resolve that was hard to the point of being cruel.

"Ride on!" muttered McQuinn, the Sheriff.

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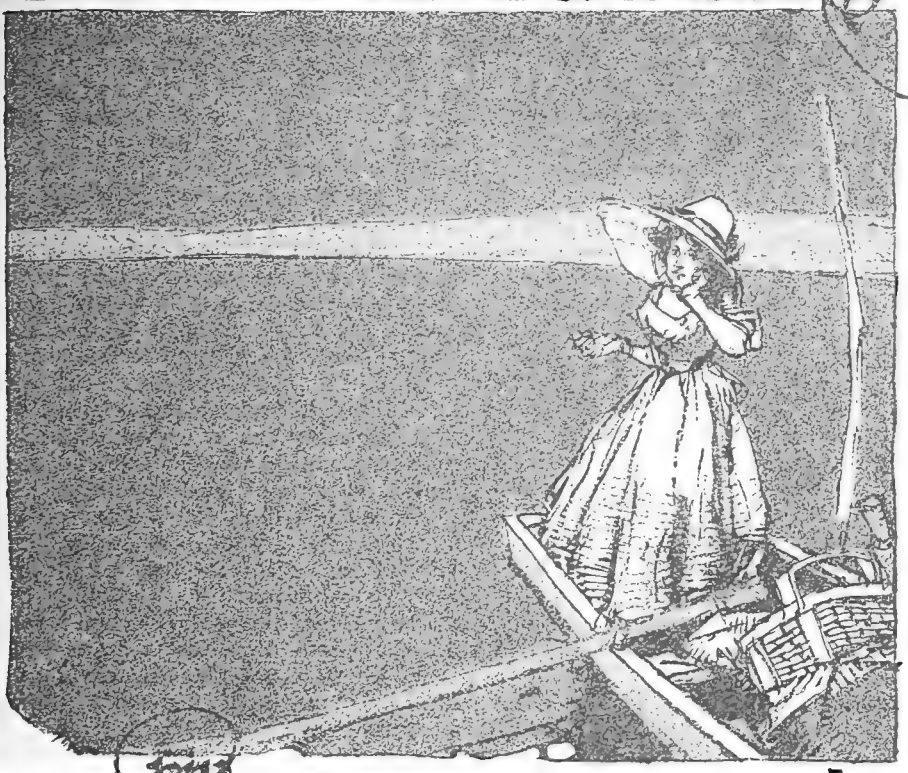
The PRICE of a PEARL



By Frances R. Sterrett

THERE are two things that every clammer along the Mississippi River hopes to do before he dies. The first is to find a perfect pearl, one that will prove as famous and as valuable as the Queen Mary which set a standard when it was found about ten years ago near Lansing, Iowa, and which sold in Chicago for fifty thousand dollars. The second ambition is to meet a man, either a jeweler or a jeweler's agent patroling the pearl district, who will pay what the clammer considers a fair price for the prize he has wrested from the mussel. The pearl fisher is usually either boastful of the way he got the better of a buyer by selling him a "slug" for the price of a "button" or bitterly indignant because he could not get the thousands that he knew his blue, pink or lavender pearl was worth.

Consequently when two men came down the river in a little launch on a pleasure trip and it was rumored that they were "easy marks" for the clammer, buying anything in the way of pearl formation, a wave of excitement went quivering before them. Neither man seemed to know anything about pearls until they met old Uncle Jerry. Uncle Jerry fished a bed he regarded as his own, not ten miles from St. Paul, and drove off all interlopers with discouraging remarks about the poor fishing it afforded, or, when necessary, with vituperation and abuse that forced the newcomer to pull up his "bars" and hunt for another bed to preserve his self-respect.

It was Uncle Jerry, so the story went, who explained to Tim Gary and Joe Dunning the divisions of the river pearl family, the "chicken feed," "slugs," "baroques," "turtlebacks," "buttons" and "pearls" and the value of each. Joe laughed over the lesson, but Gary, who was an older man with keen gray eyes and thin lips, was

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curious and listened attentively before he bought Uncle Jerry's store at Uncle Jerry's price. It was whispered that Joe was not as sharp at a bargain as Gary and so paid better prices, but as neither man haggled, the clammers brought out their stock when the launch came in sight instead of waiting for the jeweler's agent, who always disagreed with them in regard to the luster and value of their pearls.

The collection soon overflowed Gary's chamois bag and filled the candy-box Joe had emptied. Gary gloated over the rainbow-hued heap, while Joe, who had joined him for a lark and because he thought it best to get away from St. Paul for a while, laughed. Joe was a big, broad-shouldered young fellow with a heavy thatch of brown hair falling low over his forehead so that he was in the habit of tossing his head like a colt to keep it out of his eyes. He was browned and burned by the river wind and sun until the rich color had crept down under the turned-in collar and up under the short sleeves of his loose flannel shirt. He was usually at the launch wheel, shouting some popular song in a strong and not unpleasing base.

Gary sat in the shade fingering the pearls, reading the magazines that littered one end of the boat or intently studying steamship and railroad folders as though he was not sure what they would do when they left the river. They had plenty of money and paid for the pearls in crisp new bills that the clammers pocketed hastily in their fear lest Gary might change his mind and recall them.

II

CORNELIA HANSON sat in her snub-nosed, leaky boat and prayed that the little rake she had made herself and that she had just dropped overboard would catch a clam that would contain a Queen Mary pearl and so enable her to obtain money to fulfill her ambition and go to the normal school. Cornelia was a very helpful member of the family of an uncle who farmed a small patch of ground near Wacouta when he was not lured to the clam-beds. Neither her uncle nor her aunt appreciated Cornelia's ambitions, but they had been generous enough not to interfere with her educational plans. The girl had been graduated from the Red Wing high school, paying her own expenses by the sale of "chicken feed" and "slugs" patiently fished from the river, for there was not a lazy bone in her strong young body, and her freckled face, overshadowed by a mass of red hair, had a chin and mouth that told whoever looked at them that Cornelia was of the type that accomplishes its aims or dies in the effort.

Although it was not yet noon she had done the family washing, and now, in the heat of an August sun, was patiently lowering and raising her self-made rake in the hope that a valuable pearl would be found in one of the clams caught by the hooks.

As her boat swung around to the current she slowed its motion with an oar, and when she had drifted perhaps thirty feet she raised her rake and, in a flush of anticipation that no amount of experience had dimmed, pulled the clams from the hooks and threw them into the bottom of her boat. And then, before she dropped the rake overboard again, she took a knife and began the laborious task of opening the shells which had been tightly closed by the suspicious bivalves. Cornelia never could wait to go ashore and steam the shells open nor to lay them in the sun until its heat relaxed the muscles, but then her rake did not bring more than a dozen clams to the surface at once, and a dozen clams are really not so many to open if one has a stout knife, strong fingers and unlimited hope.

One after another the shells were torn apart and tossed aside after the clams had been given a rigid scrutiny to make sure they had hidden nothing under the folds of their mantles. Once Cornelia thought she had actually found something, and her heart almost stopped beating at the touch of a hard, round substance under the mantle of an old "nigger head." Her fingers trembled so that she almost dropped the pearl until it rolled into her palm and she saw that it was "dead"—brown and lusterless as a pebble.

Tears of disappointment gathered in her eyes, but she shut her lips more firmly and took up another shell. Perhaps the "dead" pearl had been sent to test her courage and perseverance; but, however that may be, the next clam-shell that she opened did hold a "button," and a very good-sized "button," delicate lavender in color and of rare luster. Her fingers closed over it spasmodically and her lips moved as though

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she uttered thanks to some river deity before she looked at it again and thought what its discovery meant to her.

It was then that the launch came down the river, drifting with the current rather than moving under its own power. As he saw the girl in the boat Gary said something and Joe turned the wheel.

"Well, sister," he called joyfully, "what have you stolen from the poor, defenseless clam to-day?"

She looked up and when he saw tears in her eyes his face changed. "What's the matter?" she demanded quickly. "Hurt yourself?"

He seemed so friendly and anxious that a little smile quivered about her lips as she shook her head. "Hurt myself!" she repeated his words with scorn before she broke into a happy laugh. "I couldn't hurt myself when I have found this!" And she proudly showed him her prize.

"Gee! It's a beauty, isn't it?" He spoke enthusiastically and Gary drew near to smile and admire. "What are you going to do with it? Have it set in a tiara?"

Again she shook her head, looking at the pearl almost reverently. She did not see the two men exchange glances above her. "No," she said at last, "I'm going to sell it."

"Sell it? Then let me see." Gary put out his slim brown fingers and after a moment's hesitation she let him take the pearl. Joe laughed at the serious manner in which Gary examined it.

"One might think," he scoffed, "that you knew something about pearls and their value."

Gary paid no attention to him. "What do you want for it?" he asked Cornelia, who grew cold all up and down her spine at the thought that these men might possibly pay her more than the Red Wing jeweler.

"I hardly know," she stammered; "I just found it. I haven't weighed it yet. It's a good color," she ventured timidly.

"Very good," he agreed.

"And the luster is unusually good."

"Yes."

"I think it weighs all of ten grains," she took courage, "and the best 'button' pearls are worth——"

"Fifty dollars a grain!" interrupted Joe. "I have mastered that fact if nothing else."

Gary frowned on him. "You'll never make a trader, Joe," he said good naturedly, "you talk too much. Well, what's your price?" He turned to Cornelia.

The girl darted a quick glance from him to Joe. She wanted as much as she could get and this stern-faced older man was evidently determined to buy as cheaply as he could, after the manner of pearl buyers.

"It's true," she said at last, "that good 'button' pearls are worth fifty dollars a grain."

"This certainly looks good to me." Joe touched the pearl that lay in Gary's palm with a stubby finger.

"Will you keep still!" Gary spoke impatiently. "We haven't any scales so we will have to take your word in regard to the weight. You think it's ten grains?"

The girl gasped before she took the pearl and weighed it again in her brown hand, conscientiously considering the question with frowning brows. She thought it was a trifle over ten grains but she would not mention the fraction. "Yes," was all she said, "fully ten grains."

"And you want fifty dollars a grain?"

Again that thrill ran down her back and she actually could not speak for a second. Gary looked at her keenly as he said to Joe: "She looks honest and the pearl looks honest, too."

Joe nodded and smiled at anxious Cornelia. "Oh, take it," he cried, "and let the young lady go and buy herself an aeroplane. Have some candy while you're waiting," and he threw a box of the candies that his sweet tooth demanded into her boat. "It's good candy," he suggested as she did not touch it.

She did not even look at it. Her eyes were on Gary, and she caught her breath with a sob as he took a roll of money from his pocket and counted off twenty-five twenty-dollar bills. Her hand shook so that she could scarcely take them when he handed them to her and slipped the pearl into his pocket.

"AND now," he said jovially, "I wonder if you can tell us where the lotus-lily field is? I understand it is one of the sights of the river and we might as well look at it as we go by."

"It is about half a mile farther down, in the first slough to the right," she could hardly control her voice to answer.

"Any clammers there?" asked Joe, nib-

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bling a chocolate he had taken from a freshly opened box.

She smiled happily. "I guess you can't get away from the clammers while you stay on water that empties into the Mississippi."

"We can't afford to stay with them much longer," laughed Gary, "their society is too expensive. Much obliged to you."

"I'm much obliged to you," she echoed fervently, as she stood, a quaint little figure in her ill-fitting gingham dress that was badly stained with water and mud.

Joe leaned over the gunwale. "Don't be reckless with your wealth," he cautioned. "And if you buy an automobile be sure and get a good one. Do you like to read? Have a magazine!" And he threw a handful of Gary's cherished periodicals into her boat as the launch went by. "Good-by, little sister!"

She stood looking after them until Joe waved his hand before the launch rounded a bend in the river and disappeared. Then she dropped weakly to the bottom of her boat, the money clutched tightly in her hand. How crisp and clean the bills were! Twenty-five twenty-dollar bills. She counted them slowly and with increasing bliss. She had never had so much money, she had never seen so much money. Now she could go to the normal school, could escape from this hated river with its smell of steaming clams, its unrest and feverish expectation.

Gary had put the pearl in his pocket with very evident satisfaction.

"Little fool!" he remarked pleasantly. "I can sell it for twice five hundred dollars."

"You can?" Joe turned around. "Then why didn't you pay her more?"

"I gave her more than she will ever be allowed to spend," he laughed. "I tell you, Joe, my boy, this is a good stake. We're making thousands every mile. I don't know but we had better take the pearls to Europe instead of selling them in Chicago or New York. I believe we could get better prices."

Joe squirmed uneasily. Cornelia's honest red head and freckled face had aroused his sleeping conscience. "Perhaps," he muttered. "I wish you hadn't cheated that little girl. I didn't mind the old mossbacks up the river, but a girl's different."

"Don't get sentimental. It plays the devil with a man's business."

"A pretty business!" sneered Joe. "The devil ought to be played with it!"

Gary watched him with narrowing eyes and his loose lower lip tightened. "Wait until you are in London, in London with your pockets full of money! Then you will feel differently," he prophesied, and went on to paint in vivid colors the gay, careless life they would lead when they had sold their pearls and had nothing to do but enjoy themselves. "And Paris! Think of Paris, kid!" He could not afford to let Joe get sentimental. The boy's personality was an open sesame to the most suspicious clammer. Joe made friends with every one and left everybody in an amicable glow engendered by his hearty laugh, pleasant voice and strong magnetism. No one could help liking Joe and Joe must not be allowed to become sentimental. They would let pearls alone for the rest of the day, Gary decided, and loaf and fish and visit the lotus-lily field and by morning the kid would be ready for business again.

III

CORNELIA'S relatives had been willing for her to have anything she could pay for herself, and when she showed her aunt the roll of bills that worthy woman patted her on the shoulder and said how glad she was that Fortune had at last realized she owed a duty to the Hanson family and advised Cornelia to hasten to the bank and deposit the money at once.

"It isn't safe to keep it in the house. You know what a borrower your uncle is. Don't you risk losing it by waiting, but take your boat and get to Red Wing as fast as you can."

Cornelia recognized the wisdom of her advice and, tired as she was, she plied her oars with such vigor that she reached the bank fifteen minutes before it closed. She put down her money with a breathless little air of pride and held her head very high as she said to the cashier: "I want to leave this in the bank, if you please, sir."

The cashier smiled good-naturedly, quite understanding her excitement, for it was plain that she had not been a bank depositor before.

"Want to make a deposit, eh? Five hundred dollars, you say? That is quite a lot of money, isn't it?" He drew the bills nearer to count them and at once his trained eye and fingers were suspicious. He examined the bills very carefully.

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"Where did you get this money?" he demanded sharply.

Cornelia gave a startled jump. "I sold a pearl," she managed to stammer before she was gripped by an awful fear.

The cashier regarded her curiously over his glasses. "I hope the pearl was as bad as the bills," he muttered. "Who gave them to you?"

Cornelia stared at him and her lip quivered. "Do you mean that the money isn't good?" she faltered after she had swallowed a lump in her throat.

"Counterfeit!" was the curt reply. "Who gave them to you?"

She could not answer. The disappointment paralyzed the muscles of her throat and she could only stare at him in dumb anguish. The cashier studied her face. He had no doubt that she was innocent, that she was what she appeared to be, a young country girl who had been cheated by some unscrupulous person, but even country girls can not be permitted to flood the country with counterfeit money, and the last few days there had been a heavy shower of bad five, ten and twenty dollar bills.

"Wait here a minute," he said. "I'll see what I can do for you."

His words and tone were meant to be reassuring, but Cornelia was suspicious and while he consulted the bank president she slipped away, hurrying toward the river, her heart sick with disappointment. So that pleasant-faced boy and the thin-lipped man had robbed her, stolen the pearl that had meant so much to her! She could believe it of the man, but the boy! It did not seem possible that any one so frank and friendly would steal from a girl.

Tears gathered in her eyes, but she dashed them away impatiently. What a fool she had been! But how could she suspect any one so candid and honest? He had given her candy and magazines, he had wanted her to have her price and had helped her to get it—*in counterfeit money!* He had helped to cheat her in spite of his ingenuousness. It made no difference to them how much they paid for pearls when their money was worthless. They would probably have given her a thousand dollars if she had asked for that much. And her hopes of the normal school! The future that had been so bright and rose-colored darkened and the black cloud that enveloped her made her desperate.

She made her way blindly to her boat. A group of men were standing on the shore talking loudly and in great excitement. She recognized some of them as clammers she had seen on the river, but they did not notice her and she was in no mood to speak to any one. She stooped to untie her boat and their angry words came to her more clearly.

They, too, had sold pearls to the men in the launch and had discovered that the money they received in payment was bad and their anger was at fever heat. They were evidently divided. The more conservative wanted to notify the police and have word sent down the river that would arrest the pearl buyers and put them in jail, while the wilder element was in favor of taking the law into its own hands.

"Paid me a thousand dollars for a 'button' that I didn't consider worth five hundred!" Cornelia heard Jim Hoskins snarl. "And I was chuckling my head off to think how I had bamboozled him! But he's got my pearl and what have I got? No, siree! I say shoot 'em down like dogs! What'll the law do? Let 'em off, like enough. No, siree! We can settle this ourselves without any p'lice. They're thieves, we're the men they robbed and we're the ones to punish. I say shoot 'em on sight!"

Cornelia bent closer over the rope, and the frank face of Joe came between her and the knot. The men deserved shooting, she thought grimly; they were thieves, Hoskins was right. And besides taking pearls they took hope of the future, too.

"They must have passed here before noon," put in Barney Nelson, "but they aren't travelin' fast. We'll have to hustle to catch them before they get out of Lake Pepin. We'll take Olson's motor-boat."

CORNELIA was glad, she told herself passionately, that the men were to be punished. Yes, glad! She hoped that Hoskins would catch them and shoot Gary and—she hesitated, she was not sure about Joe. He had called her "little sister" and his voice rang in her ears again as she pushed her boat into the river and rowed with a steady stroke into the current that would carry her home.

The clammers would have to hurry, even in a motor-boat, if they caught up with the launch which had at least five hours' start. And then with a thump of her heart she

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remembered what Gary had said about visiting the lotus-lily field. Could it be possible that the launch was still there? And the clammers would dash past the slough, never suspecting that it hid the men they were after. But she knew. She would tell them. She stood up and looked back at the motor-boat which was putting off in such haste that the clammers tumbled aboard. She would tell Barney Nelson. It was a crime to counterfeit money. It was a crime to cheat and rob people.

With a mad *whirr-r* the motor-boat swept near. Cornelia lifted her hand mechanically and called. She had meant to cry loud enough to attract Barney's attention, but her voice failed her and only a faint sound came from her stiff lips. The boat dashed by, sending a shower of sparkling drops over her and she tried to call again. They did not hear her and flew on while she sat down with a little moan.

The current carried her snub-nosed tub onward, but she paid no attention to its movement. Her thoughts went round and round in a tormenting circle. Why hadn't she warned Barney and Hoskins? Why hadn't she been able to call loudly enough to attract their attention? They were men, she knew, while these others, Gary and Joe, were counterfeiters—thieves! She could not understand the power that had silenced her and at last she abandoned the problem and sat huddled in her boat, too miserable, too bewildered, to try to solve it. When she saw the tumble-down farmhouse that was her home, she roused herself and with a shiver she grasped the oars firmly in her hands and turned the boat from the landing. She did not understand the impulse that made her do this, but she obeyed it.

IV

THE launch lay idle under the shadow of a clump of cottonwoods inside the mouth of the slough that led to the lily fields. You could have passed up and down the river a hundred times without suspecting its presence. Gary was busy with preparations for supper while Joe lay listlessly on the bank.

"Get up, you lazy beggar, and get me some wood!" called Gary. "A man must work if he wants to eat."

Joe lazily obeyed and dropped the armful of drift-wood beside the fire. "Don't you think," he said suddenly and diffidently, "that we have had about enough of this?"

"Enough?" Gary stood with the coffee-pot in his hand. "What do you mean?"

"Just that! Enough of robbing these old mossy-back clammers. It seemed a good joke when you proposed it to me in St. Paul, a good joke, but now that I've seen how the poor things have to work for their pearls, what back-breaking, disappointing work it is, I can see that we are doing a dirty business."

Gary carefully mixed his coffee. "Do I understand that you want to turn the launch into a floating Bethel?" he sneered.

Joe flushed redly under his tan. "No, I'm not religious. Might be better for me if I was, but some way—I can't explain why, but I feel that what we are doing is too rotten for full grown men."

"You are thinking of that red-headed girl," Gary spoke lightly. "Didn't we pay her all she asked?"

"In what kind of money?" he flashed. "We're nothing more nor less than thieves! That's all. Just straight thieves with a boat-load of phoney money that would send us straight to the pen if any one got wise."

"Well, no one is going to get wise. You'll feel better after you have your supper. Funny how hunger will make a man feel moral. Might get out a can of lobster if you want it."

A sound in the underbrush, some animal running to cover, made him drop his coffee-pot. "Hang it!" he said irritably, looking at his splashed trousers, "you sha'n't make me nervous with your drivel!"

Nevertheless he drew back as the sound of oars in the water came to them clearly. They waited breathless until Cornelia pulled her boat into sight and, resting on her oars, regarded them with angry contempt. Gary was conscious of a sick feeling of relief. He could manage the girl. Joe had a strong shamed desire to hide himself. No one spoke at first and then Cornelia said, in a hoarse unnatural voice, as though the words were dragged from her against her will:

"The clammers have found out about your counterfeit money and they are after you. Barney Nelson says he'll shoot on sight!"

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In spite of the animosity in her voice and manner, the smoldering resentment in the eyes that met his, Gary knew they had nothing to fear from her and again he thanked his luck that he had chosen Joe for this river venture. He had known from the first that it was only a question of time before the quality of the bills he used would be discovered, but he had trusted to the fact that often the clammers live on an island or along the river, in groups of two or three instead of in town, and that they are sometimes so suspicious that they would as soon hide their money at the foot of a cottonwood as take it to a bank. Gary had hoped to reach La Crosse before suspicion was aroused, but he had obtained possession already of thousands of dollars' worth of pearls for which he had given hundreds of worthless bills. He could afford to stop now.

"Where are the clammers?" he asked Cornelia.

The girl swallowed hard before she answered: "They went down the river in Olson's motor-boat."

Gary smiled slightly. His quick mind was studying several plans of escape. Joe drew nearer the bank.

"I'm sorry," he began.

"You ought to be!" Cornelia spoke grimly. "They won't stop to argue with you. They'll just shoot!"

Joe moved impatiently. "I don't care about that. I mean you and your pearl that we bou— took. I hope it didn't——"

"It did!" she interrupted fiercely, and in a passionate outburst she poured out to him her hopes and ambitions that had depended on the discovery and sale of a pearl. "I want to go to the normal school and learn to be a teacher. I'm tired of living out of the world like an animal! I want to be where people do things, where they see something besides river mud—to get away from the smell of clams, the sight of clams, the talk of clams! When I found that pearl to-day I knew it was worth enough money to start me and I never imagined I could be so happy. And then—" Her voice broke and she threw out her hands with a hopeless little gesture. "What's the use of talking! You were smarter than I was. You stung me! That's all. But you had better get away from the river if you don't want to be killed!"

HER little story made Joe ashamed with a shame that hurt. He had done more than one crooked thing—it was easier often than to go straight, but he had never cheated a girl before. He had been flattered when Gary invited him to join him in this great coup, had listened greedily to the older man's prophecies of the "easy money" they would make and how royally they would spend it. It had seemed a great joke to the boy in St. Paul to fool the clammer, but now the humor seemed to have disappeared and he was conscious only of a sharp shame that made him want to hide from the contempt in Cornelia's gray eyes. He hated Gary for his smooth way, for the brain that planned with such rapidity, for the unscrupulousness that never failed to take advantage of others. He felt an almost nauseating distaste for this life that meant that he would not be able to look honest people in the face.

Gary's voice broke sharply on his agonized self-reproach. "Where is the nearest railroad station?" he demanded, and Cornelia obeyed the mastery of his voice without delay.

"The Milwaukee road is three miles back in the country."

"Then I think we'll leave the launch here, Joe, and strike for it. We had better lose the boat than our lives. We might give it to Miss—our little friend, for bringing warning."

"I don't want anything from you!" she flared in a rage.

"As you please. It will be here if you change your mind. Get your things, Joe!" he ordered. "And here, you can give your little friend her pearl. We have enough without and she has earned it."

Joe took the pearl mechanically, but when it touched his palm his fingers closed over it tightly.

"I'm glad you can do the decent thing once," and the usually easy, pleasant voice was full of contempt. "I'm not going with you. I've been sore on this job for some time. I guess I'm not made of the stuff that can rob and cheat people. I've got a conscience somewhere, though I never knew it until to-day. I'm going back and try to be honest."

"There's Paris!" hinted Gary, his hand on the boy's shoulder.

"—— Paris!" gruffly. "I'm not going!"

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"I'll miss you, Joe." The voice was softly insinuating and the hand on his shoulder pressed Joe toward the launch.

"You'd better hurry!" warned Cornelia, who had watched them intently.

At the sound of her voice Joe shook the persuasive fingers from his shoulder and moved away. Gary knew that Cornelia's advice was good, but before he went to the launch to get his suit-case and coat he said scornfully to Joe:

"Well, if you want to be a fool, that's your lookout. I don't!"

Joe was tempted to follow him. It would be so much easier than to go back. Then he was conscious of the touch of the pearl in his hand. He must return that first.

"Here," he held it toward Cornelia, "here is something that belongs to you."

She did not offer to take it, but poled her boat around until its nose touched the bank.

"Get in!" she said. "And be quick."

"Why, why——" he began, bewildered.

"Oh, hurry up!" she said impatiently. "I want to put you on the other side of the river where you can take the Burlington train. There will be one along soon, before the clammers come back and before you can change your mind and go with that cheat. You aren't bad. I can see that. And if you get away from him I believe you'll be straight and amount to something."

Joe almost choked at the emotion that rushed over him at her expression of confidence in him, but he remained stoutly on the bank. "I'm going to try to," he said huskily. "I find it makes a man more comfortable inside." Then he added honestly: "But it isn't altogether Gary's fault. I guess I'm some to blame. I didn't have to help him. And I won't come with you unless you take your pearl. I can't give the others back to the people who found them, but I can return yours."

The others! Cornelia had quite forgotten those others who would be as disappointed and appalled as she had been. She glanced quickly at the launch.

"Oh, he's gone!" she cried in dismay.

"Gone!" Joe swung around, but Gary had disappeared, slipped away noiselessly without further leave taking, and even the flutter of the underbrush did not betray the direction he had taken.

"I suppose he took the pearls with him?" questioned Cornelia.

"Took them?" frowned Joe. "You can bet your sweet life he didn't leave any!"

Cornelia drew a long breath. "Well, there isn't anything we can do. Get in!"

"Not until you take back your pearl."

Cornelia felt no anger, no resentment against Joe, whom she persisted in regarding as Gary's victim. "I'll take it, but put it in your pocket until I get you across the river," she said.

"Nonsense! You needn't think I'm going to let you row this boat while I'm in it. Take your pearl and give me the oars."

But before she obeyed, Cornelia looked pensively toward the fluttering underbrush that hid Gary.

"I forgot to tell your friend," she said slowly, "that only one train a day stops at Wacouta and that isn't a night train. He will have a long wait."

V

GARY made his way up from the slough bottom as rapidly as possible. The Summer's drought had transformed what was usually a swamp into a stretch of hard-caked mud so that he had no difficulty in keeping a footing. In the suit-case in his hand he carried practically a hundred thousand dollars' worth of Mississippi River pearls bought from the clammers with fifty thousand dollars of counterfeit money. "A good lay," he grinned, a good lay and it broke his heart that he was obliged to leave it before he had obtained more. Later, say in two or three years, when the clammers had forgotten, he would return and work the rest of the river. Judiciously managed, he did not see why the Mississippi and its tributaries should not serve him as a private pearl mine. Here he was, only a little below Red Wing, not fifty miles from St. Paul, and in less than a week he had secured possession of property valued at a hundred thousand dollars. It had been so easy!

He wondered whether the same system could not be used for other things and regretfully dismissed the idea because there are few articles as valuable as pearls that can be so easily transported and disposed of. No, he had better stick to his friends the clammers, he decided, with another

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grin that showed his teeth, small and white like those of a cat, as he stepped out of the tangle of cottonwoods and willows to the level prairie that ran before him. He looked about with quick, eager scrutiny, but there was nothing in sight except a stray cow who mooed mournfully. Gary waved his suit-case at her in a gay greeting. Oh, it had been easy, so easy that there had been no sport! There had been no more real adventure than if he had been a farmer harvesting a crop of onions!

But, easy as it had been, he omitted no precaution to cover up his tracks and conceal his identity. Before he left the shelter of the slough he stopped and, opening his suit-case, took out a little mirror which he fastened to the trunk of an old cottonwood so that it would reflect what light there was. He rubbed talcum powder generously into his black hair until it was a good gray and then with a make-up outfit he skilfully added twenty years to his appearance. He worked deftly and rapidly as though used to handling grease-paints and pencils. The loose collar of his negligee shirt gave place to one of stiff linen and when he added a black bow tie and gave a formal shape to his soft hat of black felt the transformation from a careless man of thirty-five to a precise creature of over fifty was done and well done. He made sure of that with a very careful examination before he returned his tools to his suit-case and stepped out into the road that ran along the edge of the bank.

He was feeling so confident and triumphant that it was difficult to bring his carriage and walk within twenty years of his appearance and he swung along with a youthful stride.

The afterglow had faded now and night shrouded the prairie in a dark gloom through which Gary moved like a shadow. He was in no hurry. From his study of the railroad folders he knew that no train stopped at Wacouta, the nearest station, at night and he decided to walk on and follow the road out into the prairie until he came to a farmhouse far enough from the river to make it safe for him to stop. In the morning he would hire the farmer to drive him to one of the towns on the railroad that ran back in the country and that would enable him to reach Chicago. The first thing was to get away from the river, along which Cornelia had said the clammers were hunting him.

HE WAS so absorbed in his thoughts that he did not hear or see an automobile on the road until the machine was on him and only a quick jump enabled him to escape something more serious than a fall. The chauffeur brought the car to a sudden stop and ran back. Gary's quick brain saw the hand of Fate in the collision and he staggered when he raised himself and swayed as though he could not stand.

"I say!" the chauffeur was pale and breathless. "I'm awful sorry! Never saw you! Hope you aren't hurt?"

Gary peered from under his whitened eyebrows and saw a man about thirty years old with an honest, rather heavy, face, his eyes hidden by a pair of goggles, and smiled inwardly while his face twisted with what was meant for pain.

"No," he said, with a manufactured groan. "Nothing worse than a sprained ankle, I guess. I don't seem to be able to use my right foot. Why in thunder didn't you toot your horn and light your lamps?" he exclaimed with pardonable irritation.

The frightened chauffeur stammered an explanation that did not explain very satisfactorily but which closed with an offer to take the injured man wherever he would say. Gary allowed himself to be helped into the car, giving one or two sighs and as many groans for good measure. "Timothy Gary," he thought, in the midst of an echoing moan, "you are surely Fortune's pet to-night! It will be no trick now to get across the country!"

"Where shall I take you?" asked the penitent chauffeur, when he had made him as comfortable as he could. "Red Wing or Lake City? Or are you staying at one of the cottages here?"

It was amazing how easily the answer flowed from Gary's lips. He had never realized the vivid power of his imagination until his story unfolded itself, sentence by sentence, with a glibness and a sincerity that made him feel that he had never fully appreciated his own gifts.

"I came down from St. Paul to-day on the steamer *Pepin* on my way to St. Louis," he began, "and after we left Red Wing, the clerk gave me a telegram he had received there that should have been handed to me at once. I wanted to knock his stupid head off when I read that my little boy is dangerously ill in Northfield—diphtheria.

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You know what that is! I was nearly crazy and wanted the captain to put back. Of course, he wouldn't, and if I hadn't been insane with anxiety I wouldn't have asked it, but a man doesn't think of any one but himself when he hears his only child is dying. At last I persuaded him to put me ashore. He said I could get a train at Wacouta that would take me to Red Wing where another road runs directly to Northfield."

"Sure you can!" agreed the chauffeur. "But no train stops at Wacouta at night. Was the little boy very sick?"

"Dying, the wire said," and Gary hid his smiling face in his handkerchief. "Our only child!" The words were stifled in the linen. "I've got to get to him! I've got to do it!" he cried tensely.

The chauffeur touched his arm. "I'll take you to Red Wing and you can catch the morning train as the captain said."

Red Wing being the last place Gary wanted to go, "I say," he began suddenly, as though it had just occurred to him, "why shouldn't you drive me to Northfield? I'll pay you well. It's worth money to get there to-night and see how my boy really is. I'll give you seventy-five dollars."

"Better make it an even hundred," said the chauffeur promptly. "I'm liable to get into trouble if I keep the car out all night."

"I thought you owned the car!" Gary's surprise was meant to be flattering. "I'll give you a hundred gladly if you'll get me to Northfield before morning."

"Half of it in advance?" suggested the chauffeur.

"The whole of it in advance if you don't trust me." And Gary promptly took out a roll of bills that made the chauffeur's eyes bulge and peeled off five twenties. "There," he said, "take those and let your machine out!"

The chauffeur took the bills and bent down so that the light of the lamps fell on them to count and when he saw the denominations he stooped closer and stiffened himself so that the man beside him should not sense the thrill that ran over him.

"Haven't you seen a twenty-dollar bill before?" Gary punched him impatiently. "Pull yourself together and give me some speed for my money!"

The chauffeur folded the bills and put them in his pocket in a dazed sort of a way that amused Gary and then the car proceeded to break what speed laws there might have been in southern Minnesota.

IT HAD been growing darker rapidly. The clouds that had brooded in the west all day spread out over the sky and hid any light that the stars and moon might have shed. There was something oppressive in the darkness and the heat as the car sped along. The two men talked little. At intervals Gary made some reference to the child. The chauffeur sat bunched over the wheel. He was not particularly sympathetic, but Gary had knocked about the world too much to expect sympathy from a stranger. He had no fear of his covetousness and neither did he bother over what would happen when they reached Northfield. He would have the man drive him to the hotel and then it would be an easy matter to elude him.

He lost track of time and was surprised when he saw before them the lights of a town. "Northfield?" he questioned, rousing himself. "You have certainly covered the ground!"

The chauffeur grunted something and increased his speed.

He would buy a car himself, Gary decided, the biggest and best the London market afforded, and after metropolitan pleasures palled he would enjoy the exhilaration of speed. He had always heard that the roads of France could not be beaten. In six weeks he would see how they compared with those in Minnesota.

The car reached the town limits and turned abruptly to the right. The chauffeur still drove it at high speed.

"See here," nervously objected the passenger, "aren't there any speed laws in this part of the country? I want the hotel, not the jail!"

Even as he spoke they were hailed from the sidewalk, and as the chauffeur, in spite of Gary's remonstrances, slowed the car under the white glare of a street light an indignant officer ran toward them.

"Don't you know better than to run through town like a streak of lightning?" he demanded. "I'll have to take you to the station!"

Gary was voluble in his objections, spoke of his sick child, his hand fingering the roll of bills, but the chauffeur grasped his arm.

"Yes, take us to the station!" he said, with a curious, breathless gasp. "I want

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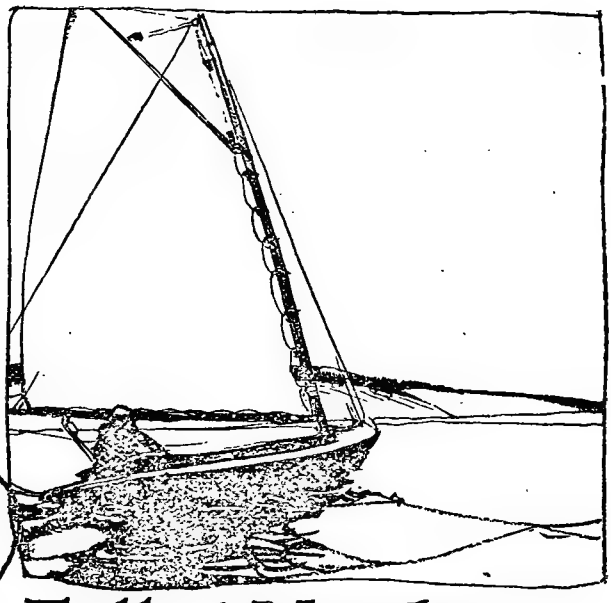
this man arrested for passing counterfeit money!"

Gary crumpled like a rag. The accusation was so unexpected, a very bolt from a clear sky. Paris and London floated vaguely before his dazed brain and his feet pressed hard against the suit-case with its hundred thousand dollars' worth of pearls. Then he pulled himself together.

"What the —— do you mean?" he snarled, trying to shake off the hand that clutched his arm.

"Just what I say. I want you arrested for passing counterfeit money and I can offer a hundred dollars in evidence. It was unfortunate you met me to-night," he went on gently as Gary stood stunned, the policeman gripping his other arm. He pushed back his goggles and Gary saw his eyes, sharp and clear; they transformed the expression of his face which was no longer dull and heavy. "I'm Tom Pittson, cashier of the Red Wing bank, and I've been looking for you all day. I had my suspicions when I first met you on the Wacouta road. You're the man who has been buying pearls from the clammers and flooding the country with bad money. By the way," he added genially, "this isn't Northfield. It's Red Wing. You can wire Northfield to inquire about your sick child."

But for once in his life Gary was dumb. His brain felt like hot mush and it held only one thought, one that concerned the hundred thousand dollars' worth of pearls in the suit-case at his feet which would be taken from him as ruthlessly as he had taken them from the clammers.



Single Handed Yachting

by Talbot Mundy

. . . and she's down, hull down, on the out trail,
The trail that is always new.

THE trait of human character that dies hardest before the advance of civilization is the love of adventure, and it is consequently not at all surprising that there is more pure unalloyed adventure to be met with nowadays than there ever was before—pessimists notwithstanding. Nature always finds some means, the best means, of supplying a universal want. But, like the knights-errant of old, you must go out armed cap-a-pie to look for it.

You will have an advantage, though, over the old-time knight-errant. The awful, unbelievable lies that they used to tell on their return from each grailing expedition

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about dragons and giants are proof positive that business in the adventure line was very slack, and that they had to rely on uncivilized imaginations to provide them with the wherewithal to brag. Brag they had to about something; and nature, true to her universal law of supply and demand, provided them with an audience who were fools enough to believe them.

If any one were to tell a tale of dragons in these days there would be thousands of men out looking for them before the narrator had half finished. Before the newspapers had gone to press Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey, and the proprietors of every museum in America would have their picked men already on the trail with orders to bag at least one dragon alive and bring him in.

And they would do it, too, if there were any dragon to bring. In the wake of the trained men, and dreadfully annoying them, would come an army of amateurs who had had to wait until breakfast-time for the news. They would all have guns, and a special license to shoot dragons; and they would probably shoot the Associated Press Correspondent, who of course would be in the dragon's den waiting for the other men to come up.

When the hunters returned there would be nobody to brag to about their exploits, because everybody else would be souvenir hunting on the trail. And almost as soon as the newspapers had come out with an illustrated account of the dragon's capture, somebody on Wall Street would create a corner in dragon's teeth, and begin squeezing the bears. People really are adventurous nowadays. There is less talk and more action.

The love of adventure is synonymous with the true sporting instinct—to be genuine it must include some form of personal risk. Many people make the mistake of confusing sports and games. A game is anything that you play at, from show-poker to shuttlecock—all the way round and back again; whereas a sport is some form of adventure at which you risk your neck for the sheer fun of doing it.

For that reason football, as it is played in America, may be fairly classed as a sport; whereas baseball is a game. On the same principle bird-shooting is a game, unless you knowingly take the risk of going out with a tenderfoot, who will probably get excited and blow your head off; it then becomes a sport. Fox-hunting and pig-sticking are sports; and so is hunting bears. Most people, even people who don't indulge in it, will agree that sport is good for a man. It hardens him, develops all his better instincts, improves his temper, and gives him that cool courage in emergencies, which is the only kind worth having.

But most sports include the killing of some animal; or the possibility, as in football, of maiming an opponent; or, as in polo and pig-sticking especially, of injuring a horse. And there is a large body of men—all honor to them!—who have plenty of good red blood in their veins and will gleefully risk their own necks in any cause that seems worth while, but who hate to kill or injure a living thing. That is where civilization steps in.

There is still another class of men, not quite so numerous perhaps but just as important, who like their sport best when they can practise it alone. Like the knight-errant of old, they prefer to go out unaccompanied to see what may happen. They hate a crowd; and to men like that two is a crowd. They hate rules and restrictions and like to be a law unto themselves, making their own beds and lying on them, seeking their own difficulties and facing them unaided, annoying nobody, asking help of nobody, quietly and unostentatiously playing what they call the game. They are good men. It is for them, and the men who hate to kill things, that this article is written.

LISTEN then, you quiet, thinking men who love adventure and the quickening thrill of danger without notoriety. Here is a sport for you! You can limit your expenses to suit your own pocket-book. You need join no club, for the open sea will be your club, and the gulls will be your club-mates. You will have no rules to obey, save what you make yourself for your own safety and convenience. You will be care-free and independent. It will give full scope to your courage and resource and self-reliance; and daily—no, hourly!—it will bring you face to face with some new predicament that will call for instant decision and action treading on the heel of thought. Try single-handed yachting!

Like everything in the world that is

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worth doing, single-handed yachting is a hard school for the beginner. It is as different from ordinary yachting as food is different from drink. It will tax your courage and determination to the utmost from the very start, as well as your power of observation. And it will call for the exercise of more discretion than any other sport in a world that is full of sports. Nobody can teach you but yourself, and you can teach yourself only by degrees.

If you try to begin in the middle, you will come a cropper, or be forced to give up in disgust, or else you will descend to the single-hander's under world, and become a yachtsman. Nothing annoys a single-hander so much as to be called a yachtsman. He associates the term in his mind with yachting caps—things he never wears and brass-bound steam yachts, which he despises. He is first and last a sailor—an amateur sailor, but a sailor; and if you want to refer to him at all, he will trouble you to remember it. But it won't worry him in the least if you don't refer to him; he is much too independent to trouble about that!

There is only one school for the beginner who would really become one of the elect—the small boat. You must become a waterman before you tackle anything else. A man who can sail a canoe, and sail her properly, in any sort of wind or weather, is past master of his art, and can be safely trusted with any sort of craft anywhere. Remember that. But begin with a small open boat—the smaller the better—and spend at least a season poking about in harbors and rivers, or any kind of inland water, sailing her when you can, and rowing when you must.

Never take anybody with you, and never call on any one to help you. If you take an amateur with you he will probably get frightened and fluster you; and if you take a hired man he will try to teach you, and will surely teach you wrong, besides doing things for you that you ought to do yourself. At the end of a season of that sort of thing you will have found out for yourself a whole crowd of things that will be of inestimable service to you later on, when you have passed through your novitiate; your hands will be hard and horny; your muscles will feel firm and comfortable underneath your coat; and your health will amaze you nearly as much as your appetite.

Almost the first thing you will discover will be that your principal requirement as a single-hander is nerve—a nerve that is alive, but panic-proof. If you have that, combined with a real love of adventure and the spirit of independence; and if you start with the determination to do everything for yourself and do it properly after finding out for yourself which is the proper way; if you enjoy real hard work in the open air for your own amusement, you are in a fair way to become a single-hander even before you start. But however good your nerve may be, it will need that preliminary small-boat training before you can trust yourself safely on the open sea.

Once you are sure of yourself, and have mastered the first principles of almost the most difficult art in the world, that of small boat sailing, the whole world of adventure will be at your feet, the Seven Seas and all the navigable rivers are yours to explore, and you can put out on the only remaining trail where nothing is stale and monotonous and where every wave and hollow, every creek and inlet, though as old as the everlasting ages, is to each sea-borne adventurer unexplored, alluring, and absolutely new. Nothing ever happens twice in the same way at sea, or ever looks quite the same twice running. There are no beaten tracks to follow, for the sea obliterates them. It is all new always—yours to plow up and explore to your heart's content.

BUT steady! That is what is ahead of you. You are no single-hander yet! And if you leave your small boat in the harbor and go sailing on some one else's yacht, or buy a yacht of your own that is too big for you to handle by yourself, you will never be one. The worst thing you can do is to get into the grip of the hired man. The next worst thing is to make one of a yachting party. In either case you will learn to believe that it takes three or four men to reef a mainsail, and at least two men to get up anchor; that varnished decks are things to be desired; that you should run for shelter when it comes on to blow a gale of wind, and other heresies of that sort.

Stick to your own opinions that you have begun to form already as the result of your first season's experience, stick to your original intention of becoming a single-hander, and, above all things, stick

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for the present to your small boat. Put out to sea. Practise on the sea what you have already learned to do in the harbor and on the river. To a certain extent you have become a waterman; now learn seamanship. The lesson will take you all your life to learn, but you will get three or four men's share of pleasure from the learning of it. You will be learning something that no one else can teach you, and that you can't pass on when you have done with it; something that will be exclusively and peculiarly your own; and in the process you will learn to know yourself. You will find that you are worth knowing.

At this stage of the game it will pay you well to cultivate the society of fishermen—not on their smacks, but ashore when their work is done. Like all men who have been pickled and salted down by the sea, they are a good-natured breed, and what many of them know about knots and splices and the use of the marlinspike would fill volumes. If you are intelligent you will find that they like teaching you almost as much as they like whisky and tobacco—even your whisky and tobacco; when they find that you don't patronize them and won't be patronized, their hearts will go out to you—big, strong, sea-salted hearts; you will find that they have a brand of humor exclusively their own, and an insight that you never dreamed of. Their company is good.

But beware of their ideas on seamanship! They will voice the usual belief that single-handers are mad, and that any port in a storm is better than no port; both of which beliefs are rank heresy! But listen to them when they talk of using the lead, for the sounding-lead is to a seaman what his nose is to a hound, and more. They will probably tell you that a forty-pound anchor is heavy enough for any one man to handle in a tideway, but as the size of the yacht you intend to handle later on must depend on the size of the anchor you can manage without assistance, and on nothing else, you will do well to remember that there is a veteran who has been sailing single-handed round the English Coast for something like forty years, who uses an anchor weighing a hundred and twenty pounds, for a yacht of some thirty tons register!

And he does not buoy his anchor and leave it in a tide-rip when the glass is falling and he is in a hurry to be off. He gets it up and inboard, and cats it down on deck sailor-wise before he starts. Things like that depend on seamanship; and seamanship can be learned only on the high seas from personal experience. Spend most of your time, then, on the high seas in your little open sailing-boat, and in your spare time study the ways of fishermen.

The basis of your future independence will be your sea-anchor, and you must never under any circumstances, or for any reason whatever, put to sea without one. It is nothing but a canvas bag, distended on an iron ring and lashed on to the end of a rope or warp. Without it you are at the mercy of the wind and waves, but with it, if you use it properly, you are absolutely safe. And its use is one of the simplest things connected with a boat.

Most accidents at sea occur when running for shelter before a storm, or from running before the wind until it is too late to heave to without swamping the boat. Get into your head that the safest place in a storm is the open sea, and the most dangerous place is the entrance to a harbor. With your sea-anchor out in front of you at the end of a good stout warp to keep your boat's nose into the wind, you will be safe in any storm that blows, provided that with seamanlike discretion you have furled your sails and made everything fast in time. And, provided that your boat is of the right sort, you will be warm and dry. So get into the way of using your sea-anchor, even when there is no necessity, and learn to place implicit confidence in it.

THE next most important thing to your sea-anchor is the lead; you absolutely must learn to take soundings. You will discover that there are easier things to do than to handle a small boat and take soundings at the same time, even in shallow water; but if you try hard enough and often enough you will find out how to do it; and gradually you will realize how it is that captains and mates of coasting schooners can "smell their way" from port to port in a fog, though it will be some time before you will be able to perform that feat of seamanship yourself.

Any one but a single-hander who witnessed your early efforts would laugh at you; but after a little while it will dawn on you that the only opinion in the world that really matters is that of other single-

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handers, and even then only to the extent that it agrees with your own. A single-hander is always an opinionated man; and before you have been a year at the game you will be as opinionated as the rest of them.

A single-hander never finds it necessary to agree with anybody. On the other hand, he never argues. If he is asked for his opinion he gives it, courteously, carefully, and with infinite detail, as is the due of one sailor-man to another. But he has neither time nor inclination for argument. He knows. His knowledge is based on personal experience, and is consequently sound. If the other man wants it, he is welcome to it; otherwise let him go and find out for himself! He is much too busy sailing his little yacht, or cleaning her, or painting her, or looking at her from the shore, or planning his next voyage of adventure in her, or dreaming of that ultra-perfect yacht that he means to have some day, to find time to argue about anything. He is a man of a vast, deep, permeating contentment—a contentment that is fascinating and contagious. You could not drag him into an argument if you tried.

The chiefest joy of being a single-hander, though by no means the only one, is the knowledge that no man can dictate to you, save an occasional harbor-master. And harbor-masters are usually people of discernment, who appreciate single-handers and make things easy for them. Where the captain of a big yacht will be howled at through a megaphone until the blushes chase each other down his back three deep and the whole harbor joins in the laugh at his mortification as he is compelled to change his moorings for no reason that is apparent to anybody but the harbor-master, the single-hander will be left in peace at any berth he likes to take, even if it happens to belong to somebody else. But he would not be a single-hander if he took possession of other people's moorings without due cause; single-handers are also people of discernment.

Another joy of single-handed yachting is the ability to dispense with the hired yacht-hand—the most objectionable thing that is hirable, and not the least expensive. As everybody knows who has had experience of his kind, there is no peace with him. The smaller the yacht, the greater the nuisance he becomes, because the yacht will be too small to let you get away from him. And, not unlike the up-to-date chauffeur, it is he, and not you, who really owns the yacht.

According to him there is never a fair wind; it is always either too rough, or likely to be rough, or too calm to put to sea; and if all other excuses fail, he goes sick. He criticizes your seamanship and the food you give him; he annoys your guests by "working" them for tips; he is lazy; he runs up unnecessary bills; and he sneers at you behind your back to people who ought to know better than listen to him. With the three possible exceptions of swabbing decks, getting up anchor, and cleaning brasswork, there is no excuse for him, for if you are not going to sail your yacht yourself, why go yachting? Why not pay for your passage on a liner?

The single-hander, being a sailorman of simple tastes and a practical turn of mind, dispenses altogether with brasswork. He gets his anchor up himself, and is very proud of the neat and handy way he does it as he runs aft afterward to let his head-sails draw. And as for swabbing decks, he has them stained with red ocher, and a few bucketsful of water swilled over them the first thing in the morning settle that business. He has no use for a hired man in any shape or form.

Fancy working hard for two seasons in an open boat and dreaming all the while, as you will be dreaming, of the little yacht you mean to have when you can trust yourself to handle her and feel that at last you can do her justice—and then sharing her with a hireling! Wouldn't you rather wait even another season, if necessary, and have her all to yourself? One more season's careful planning will do your prospects no harm. There will be thousands of things to think of—not least of them the rig and the tonnage of your yacht. No one can advise you on those two points, because no two single-handers think alike.

Every single-hander always believes he owns the one particular yacht that is the very best for his purpose in all the Seven Seas, although he is always dreaming of the still more perfect yacht that he means to have built for him some day, when he can afford it. He is seldom rich enough to afford it, though, because rich men build expensive yachts that need expensive crews, and never become single-handers. It is the one case in this world where Dives really has the worst of it.

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YOU yourself, during the early days of your novitiate, will have set your mind on a certain type of craft that you intend later on to own; and it would be sheer folly to change your mind once you have come to that decision. By keeping in your mind's eye a certain type of yacht, and practising and planning always with a view to being able to handle such a yacht, you will arrive much more quickly at the goal of your ambition; and you will find that your choice of yachts is a much simpler matter when the time comes to buy. When the time does come, buy—don't build. Remember that fools build yachts for wise men to sail the seas in. Knowing the type and tonnage of yacht that you want, your choice will be limited; but even then, if you buy in the Fall of the year, you will find unbelievable bargains. A yacht in that respect is like an automobile—when a man has one for sale, he is usually in a hurry, and the price is correspondingly low.

But although no single-hander ever took any one's advice regarding the type or size of yacht that he should purchase, there are certain broad rules that may be laid down for the guidance of the beginner. And the first of them is: Never buy a yacht of any kind without first of all submitting her to the examination of an independent expert. Later on you will become an expert yourself, but as you intend to trust your yacht with your life it would be an unseamanlike and lubberly thing to do to buy one without taking every reasonable and possible precaution. And as your own opinion as to the soundness of the hull would be largely a matter of guesswork, pay for the unprejudiced opinion of an expert. The money will be well spent.

The next thing to bear in mind is that the last thing that you want for your purpose is a yacht of the racing type. You are going to live on board your yacht, possibly for weeks at a time. You need a yacht that will be dry and warm and comfortable. You want head-room down below, and room to cook and stow your stores and spare sails. And a large water-tank is an absolute necessity. A yacht of the cruiser type is what you must look out for. Whatever her rig, she must have a long, straight keel, so that she will heave to, and stay hove to, and take the ground, when necessary or in case of accident, on an even bottom.

The average single-hander, if you could possibly average such an independent and unfettered set of men, uses a yacht of ten tons, although there are plenty of men who put out to sea, and keep the sea, in little things of three tons, and there is nothing to prevent a man of ordinary strength from handling a thirty-tonner. The larger your yacht, the more water she will draw, and consequently the more limited will be your radius of action. On the other hand the larger she is, the more comfort you will have down below, the dryer you will be in dirty weather, and the more room you will have on deck for gear with which to get up your anchor. Also on a large boat the stowing of your punt or dingey will give you less trouble; there will be room for it on deck. The small boat is better for river, harbor and canal work, and the large boat is better in the open sea. Best of all, then, is probably the happy medium—about ten tons.

The rig that you decide on must depend to a great extent on the size of your yacht. Your whole idea must be to get your sail area as much broken up as possible, in order not to have any one sail too big for you to handle. If your yacht is only a very small one, three or four tons for instance, you can choose that best of all rigs, the cutter. A cutter will sail a point or two nearer the wind than any other rig—a very considerable advantage, and she always looks neat and trim. But on any yacht above three or four tons the mainsail of a cutter would be too big in rough weather for any but a most exceptional seaman.

A yawl, of course, has a much shorter boom than a cutter, her mainsail being higher and narrower, and easier to handle for that reason. The mizzen of a yawl is extremely useful when lying hove to, as it keeps the yacht's nose into the wind, enabling the owner to leave the helm when he wants to, and go below to cook, or even sleep. Most single-handers seem to agree that a yawl is the best rig for anything between five and ten tons.

ONCE you get above ten tons, however, there are two rigs which especially commend themselves—the ketch and the schooner. The ketch is a sort of cross between a schooner and a yawl. A ketch's mizzen is stepped farther forward than a yawl's, and is larger; her mainsail

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is consequently higher and narrower; her sail area is more equally broken up than in any other rig. It is a rig that is very common on the English coast, and in the present writer's opinion it is infinitely the best rig for the single-hander.

The schooner rig is American in its origin and is too well known along the American coast to need description; it was designed by a race of first-class seamen to meet certain conditions, chief among which was the custom of carrying as few hands as possible. It is consequently a rig that must appeal strongly to the single-hander, and although a schooner is often awkward in stays and will not go so near the wind as a cutter or a yawl, it has good points that can not be overlooked. The *Tilicum*, that was sailed single-handed round the world, was a three-masted schooner; and that fact alone ought to be enough to demolish any arguments against the rig.

Still, every single-hander being entitled to his own opinion, and the present writer among them, he gives his vote unconditionally for the ketch, which in his humble opinion combines the advantages of a schooner and a yawl, with the disadvantages of neither of them.

There are a number of other rigs to choose from, and each of them has its advocates. You will find single-handers sailing the seas in every conceivable kind of rig, and every man-Jack of them believes honestly and sincerely that his is the only right one. And he proves the strength of his convictions by sticking to the same stout little ship season after season, wonderfully satisfied with her and performing feats of endurance and hardihood in her that seem unbelievable to the mere landsman.

And after all the rig is not nearly so important as the hull, which must be tight and seaworthy. Given a good stout hull and a first-class seaman to handle her, the type of rig becomes only a minor detail. So long as the rigging is good and strong, the blocks a size larger than is necessary, and the running gear in good condition, a good seaman can get along with any rig. And the single-hander is always a good seaman, because by force of circumstance he has to be. From constant association he comes to love his little ship more dearly than any mere landlubber ever cares for his home on shore. Loving her, he looks after her wisely and in due season, and his running gear will be found to render when required. That is no doubt the reason why single-handers succeed in so many different types of craft. It is not so much the rig that is to be commended as the man.

One more rule must be emphatically laid down for the beginner's guidance, and that is that power in any shape or form, electricity, petroleum, steam, or gasoline, is something belonging to the devil, to be dabbled with perhaps by yachtsmen, but to be eschewed—along with all other contrivances of the devil—by the single-hander. Dealers, and private owners with yachts for sale, will preach power to you, and will tell you of the manifold advantages of a little motor that will bring you safely and quickly to your moorings at the end of a long tiring day when the wind has failed you—as the wind usually does when you most need it. And from their point of view they will be right. Men who decided to play polo from automobiles would be quite right to choose a good machine!

But power is not for the single-hander. His art consists in sailing, single-handed, wherever he chooses to go or he can persuade the wind to take him. The comfort and satisfaction that a motor would give you will be far outdistanced by your self-satisfaction when, without a motor, you have picked your way along in the dark, drifting with the incoming tide and taking advantage of every stray puff of wind, and you lie at last safely at your moorings. Power—the mere knowledge that you have it at your command—will rot your seamanship; and seamanship is the finest quality, or combination of qualities, that a man can possess. That is reason enough to dispense with power.

IF YOU happen to be becalmed outside a harbor, why go in at all? There is no truer saying than that ports rot ships and men. Stay outside, then, and make a night of it! You are entirely independent. You have everything you need on board your little yacht. Heave to, and sleep if you want to sleep. If it should come on to blow during the night, you have your sea-anchor; and once that is out at the end of thirty fathoms or so of good stout warp, the devil himself could not do more than rock your cradle a little violently. If the glass is falling and it looks like a storm later on, you are surely

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seaman enough to put farther out to sea at the first sign of it in order to get sea-room before you heave to and get out your sea-anchor for the night!

Cook your supper in comfort out in the open, smoke your pipe in the cock-pit under the stars, and turn in—you and your dog—and sleep in peace, remembering always to be sorry for the poor landsmen, who have to sleep amid the dangers incidental to a landsman's life. Your only danger is that of being run down in the night. What is that compared to the risks they run, cooped up in stifling houses ashore? You are free out there in the open—free of the whole round world. You can sail anywhere you like, and start the moment you make up your mind.

Knowing what you know now of seamanship, you can cross the Atlantic if you want to, and pick up the Bishop's Rock Light on the other side some fine morning! Doesn't that appeal to you? Never forget, as you lie there in the bosom of the sea, to pray for the unhappy landsman, who has to make his bed on dry land and has yet to taste his freedom, and the feeling of unmitigated bliss that belongs only to the single-hander!

But he must be a selfish man, this single-hander, this hermit of the deep who keeps himself to himself on his little yacht! Is he? Ask the other fellows, the men that know. The sea does not breed selfish men. The single-hander has looked alone at the broad Atlantic, racing foam-topped before a shrieking wind, and laughed in the teeth of it. His heart is too bold for meannesses. Out on the sea there he has learned to know himself, and he knows how to look over and beyond the weaknesses of others. The only thing that could make a single-hander mean would be to take his yacht away!

He has tasted the most intoxicating draught that is given to any man—the quiet, discerning approval of men who understand. Supposing you had made a passage in thick weather and had worked your way tirelessly into a port that was crowded with larger yachts waiting for finer weather, and the harbor-master said to you: "Just come round? Bit dirty outside, wasn't it?" and you answered that it was a little rough, and the harbor-master nodded and invited you to pull farther up the harbor. Could you be mean after that? Wouldn't you rather have that harbor-master's nod of approval, and the wonder of the sheltering yachtsmen, than the roar of several thousand fans who don't know half the time what they're roaring at? So would the single-hander—and he gets it.

Go, then, and be a single-hander! You will never regret it as long as you live. In health and strength and peace of mind, and everything that counts for happiness, you will be better off; and you will meet with some new adventure every day you live. Show me a single-hander and I will show you a good citizen, one that will fight for his country if need be, a man who, when the horizon looks gray and ugly, will know that there is blue water somewhere out beyond it, and will set out, with hatches battened down and sails double-reefed and with proper and seamanlike caution, to find it.

He's not what you would call spectacular. On board his yacht he usually wears a sweater that once was clean, and an old pair of flannel trousers. His feet, which are usually bare, are unhandsome from hard use and sun and salt water. He is as much unlike the fashionable yachtsman as any one you could imagine. And he doesn't talk much. But he is a man who has formed a habit of getting there, and though the place he wants to get to is seldom much good from a business point of view, he is none the worse citizen for that. It's the getting there in the teeth of the weather that counts, not the reward at the other end.

Go and be a single-hander!

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The White Sheep

by Frank Condon

TWO doors below Kelley's inebriation foundry on the Bowery is the rusty, dismal entrance to Cohen's scrap-iron saloon, and as you enter Cohen's doorway you turn sharply to the left and mount upwards. A stairway, darker than the inside of a whale, leads you uncertainly along until you face a pair of chipped and battered doors, and beyond these portals is the celebrated Briar Pipe Hall of more or less malodorous repute in the dead, dead days of Devery.

The Briar Pipe no longer exists. Its walls and ceiling remain, but its name has departed—it is nothing now but a memory in the minds of grizzled police officers and an inky splash on the dusty record-books at headquarters. It has faded into the past and so have the Squirrels who met there and planned ingenious schemes to bring about a more general circulation of Uncle Sam's pleasing green lithographs.

Rolls of waste paper and useless lumber fill the big room to-day, but on a certain snowy night when Rover was a pup, Red Cavanaugh stood behind the rostrum and beat upon the table with a bung-starter.

"This meetin' is adjourned!" he yelled sonorously. "Everything's over!" *Bang! Bang!* from the gavel, and eventually from the perspiring chairman, a disgusted "Oh, ——!"

Red Cavanaugh was the respected and perpetual president, general manager, boss, leader, foreman, superintendent and spiritual adviser of the Squirrels. He was as bulky as a longshoreman, as powerful as Jeffries, and when an individual Squirrel disputed him beyond endurance, the Cavanaugh fist settled the matter immediately and permanently. The Briar Pipe was lighted by six discouraged gas-jets, and the chairman stood in silence gazing out upon the tumult of the Squirrels' annual meeting.

The year had been a prosperous one. Only nine members had landed in the "stir." Purses had been plenteous. Safes had been cracked. Citizens had been beaten over their pious heads with clubs and robbed successfully. Post-offices had been devastated with multitudinous and cornucopious results and that section of the Squirrels connected with the housebreaking department smiled largely upon a plundered world and counted countless hoards of jewels stolen from secret hiding-places where burglars would never think of looking for them.

Wherefore the Squirrels were happy, pros-

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perous and at peace with the police. None came to disturb the annual meeting, which progressed riotously and with furious unanimity, particularly in the matter of re-electing Red Cavanaugh to the esteemed presidency for the eighth time. That proud and calm personage glared forth indignantly over his clansmen and, after pounding with his gavel until the veins stood forth upon his moist face, he consigned the whole meeting to eternal warmth and adjourned matters single-handed.

GILDAY idled about in the tumult, stopping at various groups to exchange a word of news or greeting. He was known to the thieves and liked by all of them. Something in his thin face marked him as a man apart from the others and they instinctively recognized and accepted it. Gilday had no specialty. He had broken into homes and plundered with skill and he had taken woolly purses from fretful old ladies in railway-stations, which are two different kinds of work and widely separated. He had blasted his way into plethoric steel safes and once or twice he had stopped late-coming pedestrians at the end of his gun. He was thirty years old and he had joined the Squirrels two years before so that in point of honorable time served in that honorable confraternity he was a mere fledgling.

"We can't dope Gilday," was a frequent comment among the Squirrels, which was only another and better way of saying that, as one flock of thieves, inquiring into the character of another thief, the Squirrels found Mr. Gilday somewhat mysterious and slightly inscrutable.

The latter never gave his comrades cause for uneasiness. He was not romantic. He said no prayers at night before his trundle bed. He never dipped his hands in holy water or consorted with dominies, and no Salvation Army Demosthenes had ever penetrated his armor-plate. He was a reliable, sound, safe, sane and successful crook, and therefore a little knot of Squirrels in one corner of Briar Pipe Hall had all the more cause for a concerted attack of amazement and consternation on the night of the annual meeting shortly after Gilday had mildly ruffled President Red Cavanaugh.

The little group had gathered and Gilday was saying to them with every outward appearance of perfect sanity: "I'm through, I tell you! You may not believe it, but I'm completely finished with this kind of work. I'm not goin' to rob any more homes or steal any more leathers. I'm not goin' to stick people up at night or bust into safes. I'm not flutterin' around in any moral spasm of reform and I haven't got any cheerful ideas about heaven and harps and the joy over one lost sheep that chases back to the fold. Only this—I'm goin' to try honesty as a little lark—as an experiment. I'm goin' to be decent, not because it will please Providence and the ministers, but because I want to be honest, and I always be what I want to be regardless of what anybody says or thinks."

"Rats!" ejaculated a grizzled yegg on the outskirts of the audience.

"You're a pie-faced lunatic!" added a Mr. Sweeney, who once held up a Southern Pacific express single-handed.

"Maybe you'd like us to give you a pair of knitting-needles, so you can get into the Old Ladies' Home all decent-like," purred a giant panhandler.

Gilday grinned amid the rain of sarcasm and barbed insult.

"Kid your heads off," he remarked, undisturbed. "I'm through being a crook, and that goes as it lays."

"D'ye mean," some one asked sharply, "that you're quittin' the Squirrels?"

"Right plump on the top of the nail, pardner!" smiled Gilday. "This is the last meetin' I attend. My resignation dates from to-night, and hereafter you'll all have to struggle along without your little playmate as best you can."

"You'll be mighty sorry you done this," added the speaker. "Quittin' the Squirrels ain't any afternoon lark, and you take a long chance. You'll remember, if you peek back into your affairs, that the Squirrels pulled you out of the Tombs more'n once, and if the Squirrels stop pullin' you out, you don't get out."

"You mean I don't get in!" Gilday snapped. "I just told you that I'm goin' to quit being crooked. I'm not goin' to do anything that'll put me in the Tombs. They don't chase honest men into jail, Paddy, and I'm going to be an honest man."

A heavy hand fell upon Gilday's shoulder and a heavy voice sounded in his ear.

"What's this you're gabbin' about?" asked Cavanaugh.

"I'm resigning from the Squirrels," re-

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plied Gilday. "I'm tellin' this bunch of yaps that I'm going to stop being a crook and it seems to disturb them."

The assembly broke into a storm of jeers, protests, explanations, and profanity, and Red Cavanaugh listened to it all without comment. The muscles of his broad, red face were motionless and his expression conveyed no message. He was accustomed to hearing strange things from his men and he glanced about him impassively while the Squirrels chattered. Gilday faced him easily and confidently.

"So you're leavin' us," Red said, when the hubbub had quieted.

Gilday nodded.

"Any reason why I shouldn't quit if I want to?"

"None," replied Cavanaugh gravely. "What are you going to do?"

"Look for work. There's room for me."

"This ain't any sudden impulse, is it? You ain't, by any chance, nursin' a grudge against anybody or anything around the Hall?"

"Not a shadow of it. I'm simply turning over the well-known leaf and these boneheads don't seem to get hep."

The president of the Squirrels turned away.

"Luck!" he remarked briefly and the overflow meeting ended.

AT THE door of the Briar Pipe Hall Gilday shook hands solemnly with the few who remained. Then he pulled his collar tightly about his throat and walked down the familiar stairs into the night. "Jolted 'em some," he commented with a grin.

Half an hour later he was sleeping the blissful sleep of the crook whose conscience troubles him not. An early edition of a morning newspaper lay on the chair beside his bed with the "Help Wanted" advertisements turned cheerfully upward to greet the morning sun.

As Paddy had pointedly intimated, Gilday had been in jail. More than once the corrugated iron doors of the Tombs had clicked behind him, and, likewise more than once, the Squirrels had removed him to the busy and gainful outer world again after the original, unimitated and inimitable fashion of the Squirrels.

That sweet organization traveled mysterious byways, and of its comings and goings, little was known to the Average Citizen, who, in New York, is the addle-pated individual who pays all the taxes for everything under the sun and who receives as his share of the fun a swift kick in the slats. There is politics in New York; there are also peanuts and chorus girls and taxicabs and ambulance chasers and fire-sales, and struggling artists, and imitation diamonds, and snobbery, poverty, railroad flats, walking delegates, common citizens, child-labor, pampered poodle pups, consumption and midnight carousals—but, mostly, there is politics. It canopies the city from Spuyten Duyvil to Governor's Island like an all-enveloping fog, and a man is always your friend until he discovers that you have inadvertently voted against his frantic effort to become a district leader or a sewer inspector.

In the palpitating pie of politics the Squirrels waggled a grimy thumb. They were the close friends of sheriffs and ex-sheriffs, judges, assistant district attorneys, detectives, sergeants, plain-clothes men, common garden policemen, wardens, district leaders, tenement inspectors, "men behind," magistrates of high degree and low. Before and during elections in the teeming municipality the Squirrels had been known to perform certain acts of great value, viewed from the standpoint of certain politicians, and these politicians were invariably the ones who were in power—not the ones who had been in power or who might be in power or who wanted vainly to be in power. To this the Squirrels attended with perspicacity.

Wherefore the Squirrels were to be reckoned with in time of trouble, and trouble among the Squirrels usually meant that some enterprising but injudicious member had jimmied his way into jail. The "authorities"—righteous, clean-handed authorities—recognized instantly the tap of the Squirrels upon their door-post, and it was once fervently declared in New York that a working member of the Squirrels couldn't be sent upon the pleasant up-river jaunt to the villa at Sing Sing unless he butchered half a block of innocent women and children.

Gilday knew very well the mysterious and helpful sway exercised by the organization. Three times he had fallen into the hands of the police on various charges and three times his case failed to reach the jury-room. Following each of his unfortunate incarcerations there were "postponements," and

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"adjournments," and "missing witnesses," and "delays," and eventually the crisp sheets of law paper referring to Gilday and his unmeritorious acts folded themselves into dusty pigeon-holes and the victim of circumstances walked forth from the Tombs with a cheery countenance and fresh gratitude for the Squirrels who did it all.

"Be more careful," Red Cavanaugh had advised him after each release. "We've got enough agony around here without having to look after a skilful and sensible man like you."

At first the help-wanted advertisements failed to proffer Gilday an opening wedge into the new life he had chosen, but he persisted doggedly. Day after day he searched for work, avoiding temptation and snapping unruly fingers that sometimes itched from force of habit to explore gaping pockets and carelessly held reticules.

In the end, the convert found himself employed in a canning factory in the middle of the populous upper East Side. He operated a machine which had for its object in life the endless soldering of endless rows of tin cans. His wages were sixteen dollars a week and the hours were easy. The machine beside his was run by a girl named Minnie, and during the days of his novitiate she explained to Gilday the intricacies of soldering machines and other matters.

AT THE end of three months, Gilday explained to Minnie his urgent need of a home and a wife and she viewed the proposition with favor and appropriate blushes. One who thought less of the situation was the foreman of the soldering department, who had given Gilday his job. At the moment of the latter's entry into the ranks of industry and honesty the foreman, one Hoffman by name, was endeavoring to awaken amorous emotions in the heart of Minnie. He had failed to do so, Minnie believing him to be a man of dark and mysterious ways, and later on, when Gilday possessed himself of her girlish fancy, the soldering department turned its jests upon the foreman, secretly, but with a sting that somehow reached the Teuton.

Being a bitter man, he fell upon Gilday and nagged at him so persistently and viciously that the ex-Squirrel arose from his bench one sunny afternoon and knocked Mr. Hoffman down. The department saw it, and held its breath. Hoffman arose, holding his hand against the point of impact, and in the morning Gilday lost his first job.

On the night of the second day following this incident, Mr. Hoffman, who put in overtime at frequent intervals at double pay, was found on his back with a knife through his throat and the spark of life missing from his body. In the afternoon Gilday had called at the factory for Minnie. He had been seen about the building. Twenty employees of the canning factory explained the situation to the police in twenty different stories, and when the guardians of the peace sought out Mr. Gilday he was unable to give a satisfactory account of his doings on the night of the murder.

He was arrested and casually charged with being a suspicious person, which in reality meant that he was arrested for the murder of Foreman Hoffman and would face that crime until the real murderer walked into headquarters and confessed. When Hoffman met his end, Gilday had been in Central Park worrying about a new job and wondering whether the date of his wedding would have to be set forward.

In the Tombs Gilday explained over and over, that he did not kill Hoffman. He admitted that he had struck the foreman two days before, and that the latter bore him ill will. He could not prove that he had not visited the factory on the night of the murder and the police could not prove that he had visited it; so they solved the immediate problem by turning the key upon the suspect and awaiting developments. The particular development who might have aided Gilday was a little Italian immigrant named Rosso, who had also had trouble with Mr. Hoffman and who came back to New York in irons a year later with a written confession for the prosecuting attorney.

On his little wooden bench in his little iron cell Mr. Gilday had plenty of leisure to think, and as the days passed he gradually formed a theory which was to the effect that the ex-Squirrel who tries to lead a different life is doing himself grave injustice. Never, while he was a Squirrel, had be been arrested for a crime he had not committed. Never had he remained long in jail for the crimes he had committed. He laughed harshly and pounded his fist against the walls until his knuckles bled. He cursed the day that saw him started on the pathway to decency and honesty. He fumed in sardonic rage as he recalled Red Cavanaugh's

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brief comment, "Luck!" on the day he quitted the Squirrels. He had fallen heir to Luck properly enough—but the wrong kind.

ONE day the warden sauntered down the metallic corridor and opened Gilday's cell. A stranger accompanied the warden, wearing a somewhat legal air. He patted Gilday upon the shoulder and informed him that the case against him had been "indefinitely postponed" for "lack of evidence," and that he, Gilday, was released, subject only to his, the lawyer's, friendly surveillance.

In the outer sunlight, before the great gray walls of the grave old Tombs, Gilday stood for a moment, his hands thrust deep in his pockets. The lawyer-person had departed with a mysterious smile and a subtle allusion to a man named Cavanaugh and the things he could accomplish.

"So they didn't forget Gilday," mused that individual, staring scornfully at his late prison. "Good old Cavanaugh! Good old Squirrels! What's the use of trying? If I started on the honesty trail again, they'd pinch me for something else I never did. I'm going back to my own people, where I'll never get jugged. I'm going back and be a crook and tell Cavanaugh and the others that I didn't know what I was doing when I reformed."

He turned into a side street and fought his way through the familiar traffic. A thought of Minnie struck him and made him wince, but he set his lips and continued.

A half-hour later he entered Cohen's iron-bazaar on the Bowery, turned sharply to the left and mounted upwards. The doors of Briar Pipe Hall swung open before him. The room was darkened and deserted—except for one solitary person.

A massive, heavy-shouldered figure squatted in the big chair before the desk of the Squirrels' president. It was Red Cavanaugh. A monster cigar glowed in his lips. His round face gleamed as a ray of the warm afternoon sun struck it, and as the door opened he turned slowly in his seat.

Gilday advanced with a halting and apologetic step. He could read nothing in the eyes of the big man before him—not contempt, kindness, welcome, sympathy, scorn at the result of his effort to be "square"—nothing.

Cavanaugh suddenly sat up and clasped his hands on the desk before him. The gray eyes looked out coldly upon the returned one—upon the penitent prodigal—and his first remark jumped through his teeth like a lightning flash.

"What the —— do you want here?"

Gilday paused, and a sickly grin passed over his face. "I've come back," he muttered.

"You've what!" thundered the president of the Squirrels, rising to his feet.

"I've come back to the Squirrels. They were all dead right about it. A man can't turn honest after he's been a crook. I want to join again, and be just as I used to be. 'Honesty is the best policy' is fine for copy-books, but rotten for people named Gilday. It was white of you, Cavanaugh, to get me out after—after I quit you."

The face of the older man grew stonier as Gilday proceeded. He stepped from his rostrum and stood threateningly before the culprit.

"Gilday," he said slowly and impressively, pointing a fat forefinger, "do you see that door over there? That's your door. That's the door you're going out of. The time you're going out is right now. The reason you're going out is that I'm going to throw you out if you won't walk. You can't join the Squirrels again—not in one thousand years!"

Gilday stepped back.

"Why?" he asked. "Why can't I?"

"Because, you —— fool, you've got to be honest! You've got to stick, now that you've started, and I'm going to make you stick. You can't quit just because you've had one knock-down. We're crooks here—all of us—but by Jupiter, *you're* not going to be a crook! And if you try to be one, independent of the Squirrels, I'll have you put in Sing Sing for fifty years! Now get out!"

Gilday turned, half dazed. He stumbled toward the entrance, and Red Cavanaugh followed him with ponderous steps to the top of the stairs. Half-way down, Gilday halted and looked back. Cavanaugh waved a mighty fist at him and smiled.

"Luck!" he said briefly.

Then he closed the door of Briar Pipe Hall and returned slowly to his rostrum. He dropped into his chair, relighted his half-burned cigar and elevated his legs to the top of the desk. The cigar glowed and darkened regularly in the waning afternoon light, and the cheerful grin on the countenance of the Squirrel's President broadened and broadened and broadened.

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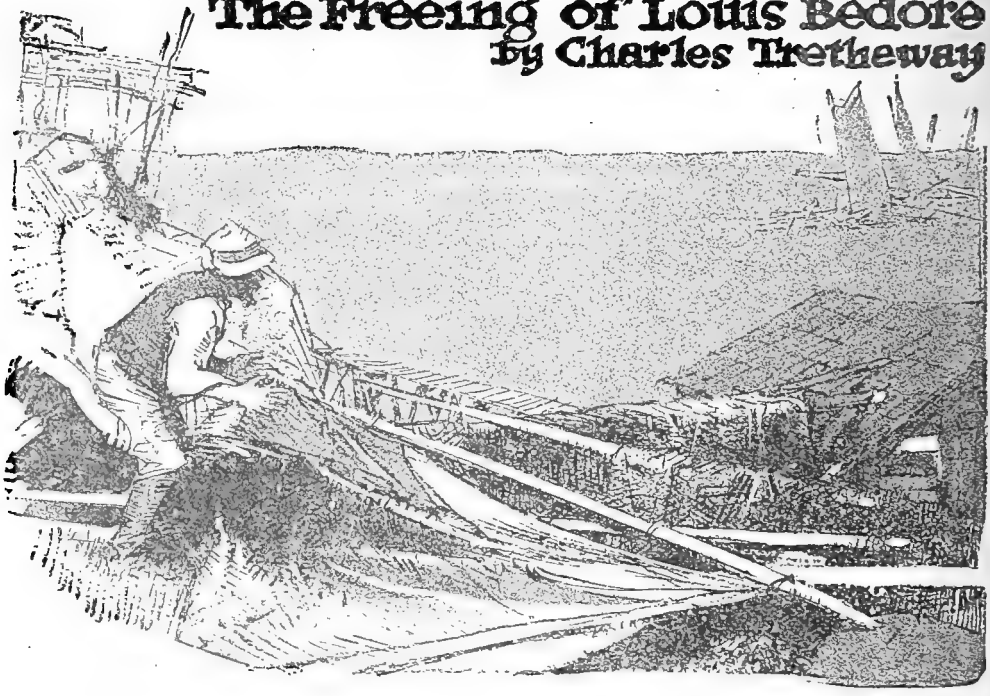
The Freeing of Louis Bedore

By Charles Tretheway



SCARCE twelve hours landed from the stanch little mail-boat from St. Johns, I was already conscious that something of the spirit of Providence Haven had gripped me close.

Part of it came from the sea, quivering in a thousand changing phantoms of unearthly blues and greens at my feet. Again it was the rude panorama of the unaccustomed on every hand—the spread of bleaching nets, the rough drying-flakes for fish, the grim stages squatted low along the water-side, and the soft vision of quaint cottages nestling down in every nook and cranny of the rock-beleaguered Haven itself.

Certain it was, too, with the rest of the men away at the fishing, that I had not counted on rubbing elbows with such a rare old sea-crab as Job Andrews. That it was a circumstance to be treated with due concern I recognized at once.

For some time he had been watching me drink in great lungfuls of the salt-tanged air, his eyes blinking shrewdly under their whitened brows.

"Ye'd be him, likely, that's puttin' up 'long with Skipper Danny Groves? Feelin' good your first mornin', ain't ye?"

I bobbed a cheerful affirmative to both his questions, taking in the skillful play of his gnarled fingers on the meshes of the seine before him.

"I guess I haven't got used to it all yet," I explained. "It was a bit rough coming in last night. But what a morning! Enough to make a man forget everything else, isn't it?"

"Aye, everythin' but the workin's o' God an' the knowledge o' sin; the coast hereabout 'll be keepin' them two in mind for we always, I reckon." He measured me for a space before he continued. "'Tis the same as though the Lord might 'a' said, 'I'll give ye lashin's o' health, men, ashore, but the dangers o' the waters be your own seekin'.' 'Tis a bargain fair enough; we've bin content this many a year."

For a moment his gaze roved oceanward, returning again to my face. "It's notional, mebbe, but you landin' along in the storm last night puts me in mind a lot of Monseer, somehow. Only 'twasn't nothin' like such a kick-up as 'twas when he come—nothin' like, I should say. But I sha'n't forget he—not soon, though it's makin' strong for twenty years, most."

I sat up straighter against the sheltering yawl, wondering a little at the altered look

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in the Sea-Crab's weathered face. He was absently caressing the darn in the sleeve of his faded jersey. Recognizing, as I thought, certain symptoms, I silently extended him my tobacco. He thanked me with a simple courtesy, and I noted with satisfaction that he was refilling his blackened bowl.

"Ye see, jes' what brought him we never rightly knowed till the last, an' there's some as don't till this day. We was only 'bout five hundred souls here then—a few less'n what we are now, mebbe, an' mighty few folks ever put ashore at the Haven them times, 'less 'twould be new hands for the fishin'. Seemin'ly he heard tell down St. Johns way, an' come after the scenery, same as they be a-doin' nowadays."

I nodded quietly, watching the birth of the first little disordered rings that broke from the Sea-Crab's pipe.

IT HAD been a day o' almighty hard fishin', as I remember, an' runnin' in as brave a cod season as I ain't rarely seen since. That same night the *Live an' Let Live*, tradin' the ports o' the Eastern shore an' the harbors o' the Labrador, out o' Conception Bay, come nosin' along. 'Twas the second trip o' the craft up our way that Summer, an' a dirty blow it 'd come on to be, with the rain sluicin' down in bucketfuls about twelve o'clock or after, an' the wind sobbin' an' cryin' outside like a maid bereft. Dan McPhail's lad was down to the landin'-stage, an' fetched the man up to my place, 'cause 'twas the nearest, mebbe, or not known' where else to take him an' his traps. I come to the door in my stockin' feet an' opened it a piece, screenin' the lamp best I could from the wind an' rain.

There on the step perched a stranger—a lean little rag of a man as ever I see. His main riggin' was a suit o' blackish clothes, an' a soft-brim hat, tucked down over a shock o' hair that was half as long as a woman's, most. The fellow was wet as a seal, an' he had a damnable trick o' slidin' over ye, inquisitive-like, with a pair o' chain-lightnin' eyes that put ye out a lot, somehow. His beard was a new cut to me, fashioned off sharp like a wedge in front, an' he was busy groomin' the rain-drops out of it with a handful o' fingers the color o' saffron.

Well, I was took all in a maze at first sight I raised o' the chap. I was most silly from sleep, anyhow, an' when the light o' the lamp got to glarin' dead aboard him, it sure gave him a rummy look enough.

He made bold to speak first, an' all polite an' reg'lar.

"I beg pardon, friend," says he. "I'm new off the trader from below, an' the young man here says I might find lodgin' with you for a time. It is no Christian hour to drag a toiler from his sleep, eh? But, *mon Dieu*, it is wet—ah, as you see, it is vaire wet!"

I took notice his voice was smooth as a pouter pigeon. Although there wasn't much fault to his lingo, I knowed him for a furriner at once, an' a Frencher at that. But I never met up with a man o' his same cut afore, an' I didn't dare guess no further.

"What's you bizness," says I, "if it's playin' fair?"

"A painter," says he, quick as a trigger.

I jes' saved the lamp from fallin'. I reckon I must 'a' looked powerful doubtin', an' there I was, starin' first at him an' next at the kit the boy'd laid down, but it didn't help none.

"What! Ye wouldn't be meanin' houses? No?" I stammers at last.

Ye could 'a' made fine vinegar from the look he gave me, an' there was temper behind it.

"*Sacre!* Houses! No—no!" he shouts, the wind grabbin' at his words. "It is not that—eh, friend—you must know—marines—the landscapes. *Sacre!* Nature in all her moods—sometimes the figure—eh!"

I seed at once by his first "*sacré*" that I'd hooked him wrong.

"No offense," says I, fetchin' a fresh grip on myself. "Your sort are a bit rare up our way o' the Newf'un'land shore. Come in out o' the wet, please. There'll not be so many places where ye could put up. I don't know but Tilly an' I mightn't manage for a spell. How long was ye meditatin' layin' over?"

He gave a little shrug of his shoulders at that, an' with it he steps across the sill, shiverin' what ye'd notice, with the cold an' the rain.

"I couldn't be sayin' just now," he says. "It'll depend altogether—ah, yes, it will depend on whether your village has anything for the painter, eh!" An' he laughed a hard little sort of a laugh, I thought—the kind ye kep' thinkin' about afterward.

Well, I soon got a fire a-blazin' to dry out his gear, an' routed out the wife. We made Mister Gentleman sort o' ship-shape for the

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night, an' next mornin' Tilly an' he struck easy terms enough. We had our bit o' parlor that she fixed up for him, frontin' the shore—ye can see it—the nearest house from here—with his old window there starin' at us now.

I DIDN'T get a squint at the painter agin till that night when we got home from the grounds at Witch's Head. I can remember him like it was yesterday, stuck there smokin' at his bit of a window, watchin' us all as we come ploddin' up from the shore, an' I thought I never seed a chap so downright interested in a set o' men afore in my life as he seemed then.

"How did ye an' the boarder make out all day?" I says, half laughin', in a whisper to Tilly, when I come in.

"Law, Monseer, ye mean," says she. Tilly had took to monseerin' him from the first, like she was used to havin' the Frenchers round. "Why, he ain't been in his room more'n his time to eat, all the blessed day. But mercy me," she says, under her breath, handin' me the towel when I'd washed up for supper, "whatever's happened the man's fingers?"

I laughed at that, for I'd guessed it out by now. "The color, ye mean? Why, it's them little paper things he's all the time smokin'. 'Tis a habit fearful strong with furriners," I says. "Ye wasn't suspicionin' 'twas paint, was ye?"

Straight off, on the second day, Monseer drifted on down to the landin'-stages when the boats come in in the evenin'. He strolled about here an' there, as if he was mightily taken with the sights he saw, his eyes rovin' over the men, an' all the rest, as keen as a weasel, askin' how many quintal we'd have in this dory, an' how many in that, wonderin' at the weight o' one fish, an' the color o' another, till most o' the lads, who hadn't laid eyes on him afore till now, couldn't rightly figger whether the little man was a fool or a new breed o' fish-buyer. But 'twas a marvel to watch the way he had o' gettin' on with 'em all. They soon forgot to laugh at his queer bowin' an' scrapin', an' I saw then if the chap had anythin' left over o' the temper he showed a bit of that first night at the door, he'd tried to stow it away in the hold for keeps.

Well, for mebbe three evenin's he'd show up there on the beach when we come in, appearin' to be dabbin' away with his little brushes as if his life was in it all. He'd always let up long enough to tweak his beard a bit, watchin' us stream ashore in our oilskins, his head cocked to one side as though he might be studyin' out somethin' he needed help on powerful bad—lookin', I always fancied, a shade disappointed 'bout things, though I'd no notion what it could be.

"Ah, it is fine, vaire fine lusty men, you would be here, Mistaire Andrew. What you call the blood an' iron, eh—perhaps?" he says one night. We was takin' the air, outside, after supper, he in a chair, an' me sprawled out on the step. He'd burned up a half-dozen or so of his paper trash a'ready, always refusin' my tobacco in that soothin'-syrup voice o' his, as if he hated mortal to damage your feelin's over it.

"Aye, they're a likely brood o' boys," I answers him, "and none the worse for their bein' a bit of a mixture either. Ye see we've the Irish an' the Scotch a lot, the English a good deal, the Yankees some, an' the French a few."

"Ah, so, too you would have the French? You see, them I have not seen. There would be not so many, perhaps?"

"No," says I, yawnin' my head off, for I was sore as a boil an' dog tired. "No, I reckon ye wouldn't have run across 'em yet. They fish with us, but they hang out 'round the point a piece. Haven't been out for a day or so; patchin' nets, I guess."

"They are from my own France, yes? Or will it be Quebec, perhaps? What is call the Canadian French?"

"Well, I mightn't be knowin' rightly. They be what's left over o' half a dozen or so that come up from Miquelon Island way an' the French shore some seasons ago. One of 'em talks strong, I hears, o' goin' back this Fall, but the other chap, with the whiskers, he seems to like it first rate where he is—couldn't be set emigratin' agin with a charge o' dynamite, I reckon."

Somehow, then, I mistrusted Monseer was leanin' forward closer to me in the dark, though I hadn't heard him stir at all.

"Ah, strange—he loves not the company of his own people as we French all do? It will be that you are all more sober here—that will be it?"

"Mebbe," says I, "but I laid it more to the fishin', an' the pay."

Monseer didn't shed no more conversa-

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tion for the next ten minutes than a bloater herrin', an' I'd 'a' said he'd gone off to sleep if 'twasn't for the little red hole he kep' burnin' in the blackness there with his smoke-stick. I was knockin' out my pipe to go in, tryin' to forget the next day's work, when all at once he comes to life agin.

"Mistaire Andrew," he pipes up. "There is the color—the tone—the everyt'ing exact for a picture I would have; for it I must make study of the men at the work—on what you call the spot. You do not think it would be so vaire difficult to manage, eh, perhaps?"

"Ye wouldn't be meanin' that you're minded to go out 'long to the grounds with the boys—not out there in the boats?" I says, takin' a full minute to digest what he'd said.

"*Oui*, to put on canvas the moving scene; to study—to talk with the men—to get the real life in the boat; to be what you call on the spot. I should like much!"

Well, with that, I took the floor for ten minutes, unlimberin' a few idees o' my own for Monseer's benefit. "Ye see," says I, "when the truth's told, 'tis scandalous rough quarters in a fishin' dory for a gentleman."

I thought he'd drop the notion then, but ye should a' seed him sit up an' talk. He drenched me with a flood o' high-class palaver 'bout such things as colors an' tones agin, an' a lot o' other prattle that I'd never been raised on till I'd no more notion than a baby what the hour was when Tilly called me.

THE end o' the whole thing was that one mornin' I rigged Monseer out, considerin' his figger limitations, as much like one o' the rest of us as I knowed how. He looked lonesomer than ever Jonah could 'a' done inside the whale, in the oil-skins, an' Tilly was for cuttin' 'em down to more of a fit, but the little man wouldn't have 'em spoiled, he said, an' I knowed they'd serve their turn an' keep him free o' the slime an' wet.

'Twas high jinks for the men in the boats about me that day, with Monseer gettin' keyed up every two or three minutes or so watchin' them work. But he wasn't much used to the sea, an' beatin' home that night he begun to turn a bit greenish under the nasty swell that was runnin'. After we hit the mouth o' the Haven he soon perked up agin, an' by the time we made the house he was feelin' in his pockets for his smokes.

I hadn't give the man credit for havin' any more spirit than a feather bolster at first, but it must 'a' been in him somewheres by the way he took to the sea afterward. He got to travelin' out sometimes with me, an' other times with the rest o' the boys, but he always acted like he was waitin' for somethin'.

Finally one mornin' I knowed what it was. He seemed tickled to death when I turned him over to them two Frenchers I spoke of, one name o' Louis Bedore, an' his mate, a chap called Narcisse Giroux. Big, hairy fellows they was, all bone an' gristle, an' two smarter men at underlayin' a trawl or handlin' a dory 'twould be hard to meet with anywheres. They both had the heathenish habit o' carryin' a sheath-knife, an' I'd 'a' respected 'em a bit better if 'twasn't for that. Giroux was a Miquelon boy straight enough, but Bedore, who'd growed hisself a great red beard since he come to the haven, was a trifle harder to study out. I fancied Giroux hisself hadn't got to know any too much of his mate. I'd never got much further with either of 'em than sign talk, though both could mangle a little of the English in a pinch.

Afore I'd well turned my back that mornin', Monseer an' them other two Frenchers was jabberin' away as happy as three old wimmen at a bornin', an', for days after, it got to be a reg'lar thing his travelin' out 'long to the grounds with the Miquelon lads. I couldn't help but notice, watchin' 'em together sometimes, that he 'peared to have a stronger fancy for the one with the whiskers than he did for the other. Monseer made better headway with Bedore than I ever thought he would, for the man had never been very free with us boys at any time o' day. They got quite friendly after a bit. Then the paintin' Monseer did ashore got less an' less; he never quite left off altogether, but no time did I get much of a chance to have a squint at his work.

'Twas crawlin' on hard for the latter part o' August, an' we'd bin havin' barb'rous weather for days, the wind layin' low mostly mornin's, then catchin' us out at the grounds an' workin' up stiff an' troublesome from the east'ard later on.

One night after I'd come home I'd got through some chores about the house for Tilly, an' was sittin' confabbin' with Mon-

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seer as usual outside, when I heard him laugh low to hisself. It made me gape at him, curious an' wonderin'. It seemed to strike me all in a heap somehow that I'd heard him let out that same laugh once afore, an' my mind dropped back to him huddled up there on the door-step that first night in the rain. 'Twas a dead mate for the noise he'd made then, an' it 'peared as though he'd kep' it tight-corked ever since.

"Mistaire Andrew, I shall go away soon; you did not know, eh?"

He took me a bit by surprise, I'm free to state. He'd made a toler'ble lengthy stop as it was, an' Tilly was gettin' tired some o' the extra work an' that, so I knew she'd like it fine.

"I hadn't figgered on ye makin' off so sudden," I says, not knowin' jes' what to get out right then.

He turned loose a reg'lar haze o' smoke through his nose afore he answered.

"Ah, I must not stay what you say, always. I have learn mooch here—I should be glad for that, eh? *Oui*, soon then I must go."

THAT was Thursday night, an' I recollected the mail-boat was due along some time Saturday noon. We were off to an early start after breakfast next mornin', for the Hen an' Chicken grounds, with a scatterin' wind astern, an' a sky that looked toler'ble unreliable as usual. But we forgot about it soon, with all hands hard at work underrunnin' the trawls an' slattin' out the fish, busy as beavers, most. The boats were scattered pretty middlin' well, an' it had wore on for mebbe five o'clock in the afternoon, when Sandy McNish bawled from his dory right back o' me:

"It's nae loomin' up tae my taste awa' yonder, lads; an' we dinna be movin' I ken we'll hae anither bit o' hell an' fury soon!"

Sandy was always the worst croaker in the fleet as a general thing, but knowin' what weather we'd bin runnin' foul of for days, we paid more heed than would 'a' been the case most times. After sizin' up the way matters were shapin' to seaward, one by one we up-anchored an' turned tail for home.

Even then the wind had begun to feel us some, slappin' an' cuffin' us gentle-like, an' purrin' through the sails like a cat. But there'd come a sharp chill into the air, an' way off to wind'ard now the water was all speckled an' mottled with scud an' foam. Every mother's son o' us was movin' good an' lively, an' we'd made fair half the distance from the grounds to the Haven, when three or four sang out all to once:

"Look sharp, men! Lord A'mighty! Looks like she's here afore her time, an' the whole Atlantic backin' her up! Mind dories, all!"

In a flash, out to wind'ard there'd come a long, pale line atop the water, makin' down on us like smoke. The crests was whippin' from the sea same as though a thousand flails was a-thrashin' it, an' a bunch o' clouds that had been sneakin' to an' fro all day swooped down black as midnight all to once an' spread out above the rest. It didn't take any listenin' to hear the two mixin' trouble, an' right away then we knowed we was in for it. There was no carryin' sail—we saw that quick as wink. Every rag o' canvas fell, an' we scurried along under oars.

"Hold close, lads, without crowdin', if ye can!" we heard Skipper Groves a-shoutin'. "'Twill blow itself out, mebbe, carryin' us home, but the sea 'll be ugly for a bit."

In the next breath, most, she was on us, screamin' like forty-seven devils on a spree, an' we were wallowin' about in acres o' water that churned like mad. A reg'lar hell o' spume an' spray burst inboard over us till we bid fair to be swamped, men, fish an' all. 'Twas somethin' to make ye think strong o' the wimmen an' the kids for the moment, but that first piece o' fury seemed the worst. We had a stiff fight to keep the dories headed shoreward for a bit, but we drove along with the force o' the hungry seas tryin' to smother us half under every dive we took, an' lettin' go seemin'ly jes' in time. Toppin' a roller, one 'd get a chance to see what was happenin' to the others afore we dropped back agin in the trough, an' it 'twouldn't be until we was mebbe a quarter-mile or less off the mouth o' the Haven that we noticed anything amiss in the fleet.

Jack Rhodes, who was some fifty yards ahead o' me, an' a length or two further inshore, was the first to sight any trouble.

"God 'a' mercy! Ahead there, men! Overboard, some one! Pull, for the love o' Christ! Watch close, all, when ye top the swell!"

I was steerin' my old dory the *Water-*

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witch that day. Flippin' the spray from my eyes, I caught somethin' from the rise o' the nex' comber that set my heart to pumpin' strong.

"'Tis the Frenchers, lads!" I shouted. "They was the first to leave the grounds, an' the painter's with 'em! There be two o' them in the water there, 'stead o' one! They'll not last out a minute in this sea! Pull for lives!"

Half a dozen of us in the boats that was nearest hauled toward them two heads as we drove on. Now we'd miss sight o' them altogether an' a cry 'd go up when we raised 'em agin that 'd blow off, smothered in the gale.

"Any show to make it, Job?" gasps out Bob Draper to me while we was down in the hollow of a sea. Bob was pullin' with Hank Wallace in my boat, an' I don't want to see two lads make braver work of it than they did that day.

"We won't—best we can do," says I, "but Johnny Rhodes' boat has a chance. Thank God, she's most there!"

"Can ye sight 'em? Which o' the Frenchers would it be?" yells Bob agin, between strokes. I didn't answer right away. I was strainin' at the things bobbin' up an' down there in the waves, wonderin' whether Rhodes 'd make it after all.

By now we'd got near enough to see a bit better, an' I knowed I was right for sure. Giroux it was who was left in the Frenchers' dory, an' he'd jes' clean lost his head, biddin' fair to swamp his boat tryin' to get back where Bedore an' the painter was swept away astern. I saw he was helpless as a baby in the gale that was blowin'. Lookin' at the two in the water, Bedore an' Monseer seemed to be yards apart, but every other time that I'd catch a glimpse of 'em, I fancied they 'peared to be driftin' closer an' closer, somehow. I vowed I'd never laugh at another furriner when I sensed the reason why. That Bedore fellow was makin' the prettiest sort of a fight, but 'twasn't all on his own account alone. I knew now what I might 'a' guessed afore—that he was usin' brains as well as strength to get to Monseer, who seemed a lot lower down in the water. He was sure somethin' of a swimmer all right, but swimmin' was heartbreakin' work in the water we traveled that day.

"Lord pity 'em! it's the red-whiskered Frencher an' the painter!" says I to Draper, after a bit. "They're most together!"

We shot four straight swells afore I got a chance to sight 'em agin. "As I'm a livin' man, Bedore has reached him!" But the nex' breath I groaned. "They're gone, sure as guns! I've lost 'em both!"

Then I turned quick to watch Rhodes. His dory was almost over where they'd been. I saw Jack in his red jersey, standin' up, with a half crouch to that long back o' his, his elbows crooked, an' his face starin' straight down like he was watchin' a hole in the bottom o' the sea. The nex' second his dory slid off the top of a great mother-wave like a race-horse an' swung into the hollow out of sight. I knowed if they was still there his work was cut out for him then. Hank Wallace in our boat had a gift o' prayer somethin' wonderful, an' I took notice he was usin' it. The only thing I could call to mind at the time was a bit of "Our Father Who art in Heaven," an' I did the best I could with that.

When we climbed to the top o' the nex' hill o' water, Rhodes' dory was takin' a header agin below, but thank God he was strainin' like a block an' tackle over two bodies that hung limp as a couple o' dead halibut, half inboard over his gunnel. I knowed he'd manage the rest.

THE mouth o' the Haven was none too close for any o' us that evenin'. Most o' the women was gathered down there on the stages, scared as a pack o' sheep. They'd watched the blow, some of 'em, when it hit us first, from the cliffs. Later on they'd seen the little painter cleaned out o' the Frenchers' dory an' seen Bedore take to the water like a dog after him.

"Close call, boys!" Rhodes sings out. "We jes' did! Sink me, if the painter wasn't takin' his last dip for Davy's locker when the red-whiskered gentleman here got his hooks into that bunch o' hair he's carryin'. The little man 'll never be gettin' it cut now, for sure. Slid into 'em both with the old dory none too soon as it was. Monseer's a bit the worse, I reckon. Better have him up to the house first thing."

Bedore had quit slappin' the brine out of hisself a'ready, an' 'twasn't a minute till he was away jabberin' to his mate, who was makin' a landin'. They was soon pitchin' the fish out o' their dory as if nothin' partic'lar had happened.

But with Monseer it was different. He

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lay all raveled out as still an' lifeless as a small sack o' flour, an' 'twas some time afore his heart begun to tick real familiar agin. 'Twasn't till I got him up there to the house, with his wet duds off, an' tucked him away in bed with a dash o' whisky circulatin' round inside him for safety's sake, that he opened his eyes right an' figgered out his latitude.

He glimmered up at me, dazed for a minute, afore he tried to speak. "Ah, Mistaire Andrew, it was death not so far, eh? First come a wave—a mountain; I feel the water, an' the sinking. How many times I go down I can not count, no. But I come back to the top at last. Since, all I have forgot."

"Aye, the way that fellow Bedore got to you was somethin' of a miracle to us lads. If any one had asked me I'd a said it couldn't be done."

I've seed queer looks, but none of 'em ever mated with the one Monseer gave me then. 'Twas like I ripped the man sudden with a knife or somethin'. He'd gone back white as the pillow agin. I mistrusted my information hadn't did him a mite o' good, somehow. 'Twas past understandin'.

"Bedore! Bedore! *Him!* It was not him that take me from the sea—no?"

"'Twas he that kep' ye afloat, if that's what you're meanin'," I says. "If 'twasn't for the red-whiskered chap ye'd be fish-bait by now fast enough! An' as pretty a piece o' swimmin', with it all, as the Eastern shore 'll ever see, I reckon, with the water like it was. No, I ain't knowin' rightly how he got to ye."

Monseer was listenin', his eyes wild an' starin', as if he was hurt mortal inside. Next I heard him fetch a groan that seemed to travel all through his body, an' he turned aside his face.

"He'll not have his head clear yet," thinks I, an' I tip-toed out, shuttin' the door behind me. He didn't touch the supper that Tilly took in to him a bit later, an' we agreed 'twas best to let the man be till he got steadier in his nerves.

That night, after a pipe at Joe Miller's place, I come into the house about ten o'clock. I could hear Monseer movin' around in his room, restless as a cat. His *tramp, tramp, tramp* was the last thing I caught when I drifted off to sleep.

Somethin' woke me sudden about one o'clock or after. It was Tilly proddin' me in the back.

"Job! D'ye hear, Job? He's gone out—Monseer!" She was shakin' me by now.

I sat up, clawin' the sleep out o' my eyes. "If he has, he'll come in ag'in," says I. "It's a bit windy for a promenade."

But I didn't like the looks o' things no more'n she did, an' a moment later I was outside, listenin'. 'Twas black as ink, with not a star anywhere, an' still blowin' barb'rous hard. In the lull I could hear some one scramblin' down the hill to the shore ahead o' me, an' I groped along close as I dared behind. When I got pretty nigh to the water-stages there I fetched up ag'in, an' harkened. "It wouldn't be the boats he's after?" I says to myself. But sure enough it was. Keepin' still, I heard him stop, an' sensed that he was bendin' down, busy at somethin' with his hands, but what on earth he was up to I had no means o' tellin'. I was on the p'int o' hailin' him, when he left off sudden, an' come on towards me. He passed so close I could a' reached out an' tweaked his arm, an' I knew all right 'twas the painter. When I got in, his door was shut an' everythin' still as ye please.

NOT a blessed wink did I get for the rest o' that night. By the first crack o' dawn I was stirrin', an' 'twas the beach I headed for as soon as I climbed into my clothes. I didn't hear a sound from Monseer's room, an' 'lowed he'd got to sleep at last.

The gale had blown out pretty well by now, leavin' only a middlin' breeze behind. Gettin' 'long down to the boats, I kep' askin' myself what I was goin' for, at first. I stumbled about among 'em for a full minute afore a grain o' sense come to me. The Frencher's dory was always moored at the same spot. When I fetched up at it I whistled. I rubbed my eyes, an' I reckon I whistled ag'in.

"I'll go bail that wasn't there yesterday at daylight, Job Andrews!" I says, stoopin' down over the bow. But I must 'a' looked silly as a goat, too. I wasn't a bit wiser at what I saw there'n what I'd been afore. I spelt it out fast enough, "but what'll the blamed thing stand for?" says I.

"TOULON—47" was what I made of it, an' that same breath I would 'a' took oath that no one but Monseer had ever stuck it there. The thing was scratched ag'in the white paint under the gunnel o' the dory, in a reddish-colored chalk that I'd remembered

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to have seen scattered about Monseer's room at times.

I hung there, still puzzlin' what it all aimed to be, when I caught the sound o' some one scramblin' over the hill astern o' me. 'Twas the red-whiskered Frencher, Bedore. I saw he hadn't sighted me yet, an' in a twinklin' I fetched up round the corner o' the salt-shed, where I could get a clear view o' the boats. The Miquelon lads was always the first to show up mornin's, an' so I wasn't in no ways surprised to see Bedore then.

There was still some water left in their dory from the day afore, an' I felt he'd be makin' straight for her. An' so he did. But he hadn't got above a couple o' yards away from the boat when I saw him stagger an' rock like a gale had struck him amidships. 'Twas a wonderful hoarse cry he gave then. Did ye ever see a man that was put out of his head sudden? Well, that Frencher looked as if he'd caught a glimpse of the Old Scratch sittin' atop the bow o' his dory. He was crossin' hisself, an' tremblin', but I knowed it was that writin' he was starin' at.

Bless ye, it was only for a minute, though. He whipped about like a flash, an' I never saw such eyes in a livin' man's head as his was. 'Twould be somethin' the look of a moose run down. Ye've seen that, mebbe, in the woods? Then I heard him snarl, an' his lips pulled away from his teeth like a dog. That great beard he carried was a-bristlin', an' from where I stood I could see the veins swellin' out in his cheeks somethin' awful. Ye wouldn't 'a' classified him as a friend, right then, of any human bein'.

I watched him take a spring back from the boat, searchin' the hill an' the shoreline, stealthy-like, his hand all the time fingerin' that pig-stabbin' knife he carried at his belt. I seed plain as day what ailed him now. 'Twas fear—the fearsomest brand o' fear a mortal ever suffered from!

All of a sudden he seemed to make up his mind, an' 'twas hurried a bit, I guess, by the sight o' his pardner an' some o' the other men comin' over the edge o' the hill on their way to the shore. He made one dive for his dory, cut the moorin' an' shoved her off. He was jes' while ye might turn around three times gettin' up sail, watchin' out o' the corners o' his eyes like, all the time. Well, sir, when the boys 'd reached the stages, he was out there in the Haven, travelin' like all possessed, with a slashin' breeze behind him that seemed to fit in toler'ble well with his plans, I thought.

"Hullo! What in blazes 's gone wrong with the Frencher?" half o' the men sings out to me, at once, while Giroux, his pardner, stood swearin' an' wavin' his arms like a windmill.

"Give it up," I says. "Swallered too much salt yisterday, I reckon—a screw loose 'pears like," an' I left 'em to study it out best they might.

THE mail-boat put in at the Haven that day at noon. We saw her smoke from the grounds. When I got home that evenin' Tilly met me at the door.

"Monseer's gone, Job," she says. "He took the mail-boat south at noon."

"Aye," says I, "he's not the only one that's gone." But she kep' on, never noticin': "He might 'a' had the decency to thank that man Bedore for savin' his precious skin. 'Twas the least he could 'a' done," she says, with a toss of her head.

"Ecod! There be queer manners o' thankin' folks we ain't all given to know, sometimes, woman; I ain't denyin' but you're right, though."

THE Summer had dribbled along an' 'twas late that Fall when the *Live an' Let Live* found our harbor one evenin' for a night's lodgin' 'gainst a barb'rous shift o' wind 'n' an ugly sea from the east'ard. Skipper Billy Hicks was givin' me the news from below.

"D'ye call to mind a little chap I dumped ashore on ye one rainy night, months back—a critter with a furrin' streak, an' a head o' hair somethin' scandalous?" he says after a bit.

I jumped like I'd come down on a splinter. "Hello!" says I. "That I would! No one who'd ever housed that little man 'd be apt to forget him."

"Well, 'tis a rum story enough they've set floatin' down St. Johns way," he says. "'Tis the papers ag'in. They be givin' out that the chap was nothin' but a spy—a reg'lar convict-chaser, an' no painter 't all. They have it that he's been takin' in the shore ever since last Spring on the look-out for a set o' lads who made off from some French prison or other three or four years

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back. One was nabbed at Fiddler's Cove, an' another at Rossport the forepart o' the Summer. 'Twas understood he'd located another here, but he'd given him the slip. Aye, the papers had their records, with numbers, an' all; bad eggs enough."

"Hold up! What's all that ag'in, Skipper?" I said, sittin' up an' lookin' Billy over strong.

"I'd mortal hate to think I'd carried a spy aboard me, somehow," he went on, serious-like.

"Spy! Spy nothin'!" I sings out. "Them St. Johns papers always did make an awful muddle o' fishin' station matters, Billy. The little man what came here was a painter fast enough; any one 'd see that. What did ye let on the title o' that prison was?"

"I didn't say," he answers me. "I didn't take partic'lar notice, Job, at the time. 'Twould be a sound middlin' like the tea our cook's usin'—Oo-o-long or somethin' that 'd run it toler'ble close." An' we dropped the subjeck there."

THE Sea-Crab had paused, knocking out his pipe. The sky had dulled slightly, and his eyes were bent, weather-wise, on the ruffling waters of the Haven. I rose thoughtfully, for a turn about the beach.

"Was Bedore—was he ever——"

He seemed to intercept my question, his gray eyes twinkling slightly.

"Well, I've only this—from Skipper Billy, too. He ain't given to yarnin' much since he took religion. He swears he carried forty quintal o' fish out o' a certain harbor o' the Labrador shore as late as last September. The fellow he dickered with was a red-whiskered parleyvoo named La Rose; but he sure favored a Miquelon lad we had here once, so Billy 'lowed—'nough to 'a' been his twin."

MOLLIE

by G. W. Ogden

LONG-HANDLED shovels were new to the middle division. Jack Ryan, with forty years of railroading behind him, granted them small favor as he eyed the consignment for his section, leaning in two neat bundles against the tool-house wall.

"It's savin' the backs of ye that the comp'ny's up to now, is it, after aimin' to put the likes of ye on pinsions whin ye grow too owld to worruk? As if a man that is a man ever grows too owld to worruk, indade! First the comp'ny fixes up a harspitle f'r ye, an' taxes ye so much a mont' to keep 'er a goin', in great binivolence, thin they sinds long-handled shovels to ye so ye won't sthrain the backs of ye an' git into it. I see through the game from the beginnin'. Gintlemen's shovels f'r the likes of ye—what do they think ye are—

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dudes? Shove 'em over in the corner, Murray, an' let ye put on the kyar."

Jack was ditching a piece of boggy track. When the gang lifted the car off at the place of labor and took up the shovels for the morning's work, Murray, a young man from the fisheries on the channel coast, hefted his short tool judiciously. "Sure, I b'lave they'd be a good thing," said he.

"Fine!" assented Jack. "They'd be great f'r lanin' on, ye lazy loafer."

The gang strung out along the ditch. Jack filled his black briar, from which the amber bit had gone, long ago, in the clinching drive of some argumentative point, took his stand in the middle of the track and drew the roadmaster's letter from his pocket.

"Long shovels, says he, long shovels, to be sure. An' why didn't he sind wit' 'em some kyarpet-slippers an' white gloves? Here is the p'int. Mr. James Cafferty, roadmaster, if ye expect a man to make a hole in th' worruld at anything he's putt to do, don't ye go an' put a long-handled shovel between him an' his task. The man that downs things in this worruld is the man that takes thim be the poll o' the neck and jabs 'em in the wind wit' his right. The big battles has always been fought man to man, an' so they will be, foriver an' iver. I was readin' in a book of history one time, how the short swords o' the Romans agin the long ones o' other nations conquered th' worruld. An' one time I had worrukin' for me a Spanish dago that towld me in the tongue of that nation they have the wan worrud for a spade an' a sword.

"That's the p'int, men, spades or shovels or swords, it don't matter which it is. The man that goes up to the inimy so close in the sthruggle that he can get the feel of him in his hands is the man that gets the belt. Foot-worruk in the ring is great, an' head worruk is better, but a good stiff poke in the right place at the right time is what takes down the purse. Long shovels, indade! If they had sunshades rigged to the upper inds of thim it would be a great improvemint. I'll sind a letter to Cafferty, mintionin' that same."

Jimmy Kennedy's flat-bladed shovel, held under the wheels of a slow-moving train to batter out the angles at the corners, was cutting the loam with a rich crunch, as he sloped the three-foot bank with many a delicate turn of the wrist. A king's barber at work on the royal face would not have applied his tool with more delicacy and cunning.

"Long shovels!" went on Ryan. "What could ye do wit' a long shovel, Jimmy Kennedy, slopin' a cut or shoulderin' up thrack? Ye would be lost, man, an' the job you'd do 'd shame any owld gray from the backwoods, wouldn't it, lad?"

Jimmy Kennedy's patient old face, placid, and flushed on the cheeks like a girl's, lifted a moment from his work, suffused in an assenting smile. "I would, John," said he.

But in spite of Jack Ryan's disparagement, the gang had to come down to long-handled shovels. That very evening he received an order to send in all short shovels at once. "Orders is orders," said he, "and because that's thrue many a battle has been lost."

THE order bore heavily on Jimmy Kennedy. For years he had used one shovel, its blade as bright as a plowshare, its handle worn as smooth as polished brass. "Mollie" he called the tool, and no man dared profane it with a touch. Sometimes a new man, not knowing the traditions of the gang, nor the standing of Mollie, but attracted to her by the brightness of her blade, would take her from the rack on the handcar and set to work. Jimmy would go down the line of men looking for her, pounce upon the violator, wrench her from his hands, giving him a dressing-down that he would not forget in many a month to come.

"If it was his wife, an' a man took a smack at her," said Owen Dugan, "he wouldn't cut up the divil about it more, the wod crab."

"Ye'll not sind thim Mollie, John?" said Jimmy, lifting a troubled face.

"He will that!" assured Burns. "Ye'll have to be after gittin' a dayvoorce av Mollie now, Jimmy Kennedy, b'y."

"One little shovel more or less will make small difference to thim fellies. Mollie ye may keep by ye, Jimmy, unless they sind a special order for her," grinned Jack.

"Thank you, John," said Jimmy, wiping Mollie's face with his palm and stowing her carefully in her accustomed place in the tool-house corner. But after supper he borrowed the key from Jack and took Mollie into the house. That night she lay beneath his bed, where he could put forth his

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hand in his waking moments and touch her shimmering blade.

Jimmy Kennedy had a clean pair of overalls and a clean shirt for every work-day of the week, which extensive wardrobe gave him the rating of capitalist among the jerries. Each evening, Jimmy did his laundry work at the creek, and every morning he appeared as clean and fresh as a rose, his overalls so scrubbed and beaten and mangled among the stones of the ford and so rubbed with strong soap as to retain but a trace of their original blue, faint as the lingering colors of youth in his own faded face.

Outside and in, all through, he was a cleanly old fellow. For example, when Jimmy Kennedy smoked his pipe of an evening it was the act of an artist sacrificing to his art—nothing offensive about it to the most delicate, no blubbering in the bowl, no wheezing in the stem, no indiscriminate expectoration. "He draws it into the stoomick of 'im," said Burns, with grave disapproval.

"He don't spit out th' good of it, ye owld hawg," censured Herself, Jack Ryan's better half, "an' go mussin' up the yard like the balance of ye."

Softly spoken, temperate in word and deed, Jimmy Kennedy was a mystery in more ways than one to the jerries among whom he toiled. Some said that nature intended him for a woman, others that it meant him for a priest. But it was plain to Herself that he had passed through the fire of sorrow, for its refinements were written in his face.

During the week that passed after the short shovels were called in, Jimmy guarded Mollie as if she were a jewel. He was no longer easy with her under the bed, but stood her so her handle nestled against his pillow, where he could place his hand upon her and fall asleep.

A day came when Jack Ryan was troubled. That was patent to the gang from his fits and starts and silences and much reference to a letter which he had received that morning. It was only that Jack was playing for courage to do what he felt to be a cruel act. He was a long time in coming to it, and then not until evening, when he set Jimmy Kennedy to picking up the tools. He approached Jimmy with an apologetic grin, the letter in his hand.

"Well, Jimmy, we'll have to sind her in," said he.

Jimmy turned on him like a savage old dog. "Hey? What is that ye say, John Ryan?"

"I have a letter here from Cafferty," said Jack, "and this is what he says: 'You sent only eliven short-handled shovels in, when you should have returned twelve. Where is the other wan?' So you see, Jimmy, they've got to have her; they've got 'er down on the records, and the big lads at headquarters must be sure we're givin' the divil his due. I can't see what difference wan little owld shovel, more or less, can make in the runnin' of a railroad, but we'll have t' sind owld Mollie along to 'em."

Next morning Mollie was started off to headquarters, a tag on her polished handle, her refulgent blade twinkling like Mr. Cafferty's diamond stud as she lay on the station platform waiting for her train. Jimmy Kennedy wrought with a long-handled shovel, saying nothing at all, but standing queerly studious at times, gazing contemptuously upon the clumsy tool. The gang bantered him about Mollie. All shovels look alike to a man that owns not even one. Jimmy, considering it all, held his peace, smiling sometimes in his accustomed way, but moping noticeably and falling into great deserts of silence.

On the morning of the fifth day Jimmy did not appear for breakfast. Examination of his little room at the top of the stairs showed an untroubled bed, and Jimmy's working suits hanging on their six nails, like the skins of six days that a man has lived and put behind him. Jimmy was gone, without a word or a nod.

"He's gone off for a tear," said Dugan. "Sure, can't a man go off for a peaceable little tear wit'out all this commotion?"

"Ye know nawthin' about the accouterments of the case," said Murray. "Thinkin' about Mollie has turned the head av him. Jimmy Kennedy has dhrownded himself in the river."

"Shame on ye now, Tom Murray!" chided Herself.

II

IT WAS a great mystery, growing deeper and more solemn as the week passed. But come Saturday evening and Jimmy Kennedy stepped off the plug, his face radiant and Mollie across his shoulder! Supper was over. The jerries,

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under the cottonwoods which shaded the section-house, were holding their usual evening symposium. They gathered about Jimmy when he walked in at the gate as proudly as a soldier bearing home from many battles the standard of his regiment. Herself bounded down the steps and shook and scolded Jimmy until his face glowed like a switch-light, and the children clung to his legs, lifting their freckles to be kissed.

With many comments on her appearance Mollie was passed from hand to hand. "So, ye have her back agin, lad!" wondered Harry Burns. "Ye're a great gineral, Jimmy Kennedy, b'y."

They pressed him to tell of his adventures at headquarters, where never a jerry in the history of the world had been known to carry a grievance before. But Herself carried Jimmy off to his supper, where he sat as placid as a monk, with the shovel leaning against his thigh. After supper, with a piece of an old signal-flag and a bit of black oil, Jimmy seated himself on the front steps and began rubbing away the rust which had clouded Mollie's face during her adventurous journey.

"It was to Cafferty ye wint, direct?" asked Jack.

"It was not, thin, John," answered Jimmy, a great deal of mystery in his words, a great deal of mystery in every stroke of the oiled flannel across Mollie's face, and an unmistakable invitation in his reticence. "Come on with your questions, lads, if you want to know the secret of this great triumph!" was the invitation in Jimmy Kennedy's mien.

"Was it t' Mr. Reed, th' residint *in*-gineer, ye wint thin?"

"It *was* not to Mr. Reed that I wint thin, John Ryan. I'll tell ye, John, how it was that I sized it up. Knowin', as I know, after many a long year of railroadin', how things on a railroad are run, how orders comes down from the prisident to the gineral su-*prin*-tindint, from him to the resident engineer, from him to the roadmaster, from the roadmaster on down to the section-boss, and from the boss down to us lads, I says: 'Go to the head man of thim all at the *big*-innin',' I says, 'go to the prisident at the start of it and state your case in plain words, like a man.' And that's what I done, John; I wint to the prisident straight direct, and I can recommind him to any man as a gintlem'n and a railroader!"

"Git out, git out, man! Ye did not!" disparaged Burns.

"Lave him have his say, y' jealous owld divil," reproved Jack. "So ye wint to the president at wanct, Jimmy b'y?"

"I did, John. I found him a big man with a whisker on the face of him like an Irish king, and the bald head of him as great and shiny as the stame-dome of an ingin. I wint to him with me owld hat in me hand, and I says to him; 'Mr. President, me name is Jimmy Kennedy. I'm a sectionman on Section Three, under John Ryan——"

"Ah-h-h, an' ye mintioned me, Jimmy?"

"I did that, John. I says 'under John Ryan,' I says, 'as bowld a railroad man as ever set a frog.'"

"Now, luk at that, luk at that!" admired Jack.

"And I tells him about Mollie, and he listens to me while me owld jaw clips off the praise of her, and whin I'd said me say he says to me, kindly; 'Well, Jimmy,' says he, 'I never heard of a man havin' such fondness for a shovel before. Wouldn't another wan do ye as well?' says he. And I towld him how it is. Ye get used to the feel of her handle in the heel of your fist, an' the weight of her, an' the balance of her. Ye pass many a pleasant day with her, thinkin' of the times whin ye were young, and many bitter hours with her, tossin' the dirt away from ye like ye try yourself to toss away the memories of things a workin'man has no right to kape. She's your companion and fri'nd.

"So he gives me a note to Cafferty. 'Whin ye find her, Jimmy Kennedy, bring her here and let me see her,' says he. 'I want to make the acquaintance of Mollie,' says he. I goes to Cafferty and Cafferty sinds me to the storehouse, where thousands and thousands of shovels is piled everywhere. It looks to me, John Ryan, like there's a shovel there for every man in th' worruld, and somewhere among thim, no man knowed where, me owld Mollie. Two days I searches for her, and I'm about ready to give up hope of ever settin' me eyes on the face of her again, whin I sees her over there in a corner, just as she come in from here, John, the tag still on the handle of her. I cries out 'There ye are, Mollie, at last!' and the laugh she let out whin she heard the v'ice of me would have done the heart of ye good to hear, John Ryan, dear!"

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"Ah-h-h," rasped Dugan, "she did not! No shovel has it in her to laugh, man!"

"Dhry up, Dugan!" commanded Jack. "Ye know not'in' about it at all."

"They can that," said Jimmy Kennedy, "laugh and sing and talk and whusper as good as any girl in the land, but it's a tongue ye'd never get through the head of ye, Owen Dugan, in tin thousand years!"

"The man is off," said Dugan, with calm finality, rising in superior dignity and moving away, "clane off!"

"Back to the prisident I goes with Mollie, and he takes her in his hand and he hefts her, like a man that knows a good tool. 'She's a fine wan, Jimmy Kennedy,' says he, 'and in behalf of this comp'ny I make ye a prisint of her, to use as ye like as long as she lives.' I thanks him, and I shoulthers Mollie to go. 'Give me regards to John Ryan,' says he, 'give me regards to John Ryan.'"

"Ah-h-h," aspirated Jack, "he did?"

"He did. And as I was lavin', the young lass that was writin' letters in a book as he talked thim off, she looks up at me and she says: 'Have ye a wife, Mr. Kennedy?' 'No, miss,' says I. 'Ah, it's too bad,' says she, 'for if ye had I know ye'd be good to her,' she says.

"Ah-h-h, an' ye would that!" sighed Herself.

"No tellin'," said Jimmy Kennedy sadly, "no tellin', indade."

III

FOR years the Central road was advertised as the shortest line to Chicago. Then a rival line bridged the Mississippi in a new place and beat it by three-quarters of a mile. It was to win back its old place that the Central road was driving a tunnel through a big hill on Jack Ryan's section, by which hole it would shorten its line four miles. Four miles meant that it could then put its trains into Chicago ten minutes ahead of its nearest competitor, and ten minutes on the dial of a clock in a railroad advertisement seem to mean a great deal to passenger agents and shoe salesmen.

But that hill came to be a tough lump of earth to handle. Down in its bowels it was filled with springs of water, slippery clay and indiscriminate large stones. It was a piece of work which dragged, in spite of the impatience of passenger agents and shoe salesmen, a piece of work which called for a great many consultations of the engineering force and a great many letters to and from all parties concerned. At last the bore reached a spot which seemed to put a period to the passenger agent's hopes. It was so soft and slippery that nothing would hold. Timbers sank, the roof came down, discouragement leered on the engineers out of the black hole and made them faint. At that stage the tunnel expert from the mountain division got into it.

The gang had been pulled off, waiting directions from the engineers. The mountain man went into the tunnel with seven flat-country line-plotters who had failed. Six of them were with him at the innermost end of the bore when the roof came in through the timbers, cutting them off. There was no help near, save Jack Ryan and his small force of jerries. To them the man who escaped ran, then on to the telegraph station to summon more aid.

Jack Ryan estimated that there must be at least fourteen feet of earth and stone down. Whether the men back of it were crushed and buried or whether they had found shelter under the slightly projecting ledge, could be determined only by opening the dread door of their prison chamber or their tomb. The men worked feverishly, dragging at timbers, scooping away the thin clay which trickled down like mortar, filling each little cleared space as soon as it was made. It was a heart-wearying task, apparently hopeless. All the hill above the spot where the roof timbers had fallen seemed to be slipping down.

Hour after hour they toiled, curbing rudely as they worked, gaining at last a face upon the fallen mass which promised more stability and cheering headway. But the shovels rang against stone presently, and the way seemed blocked to everything save drills. Great blocks of the loosely built ledge had dropped. Upon the stubborn mass dripped the leakage from above, sounding like sledge blows in the cold silence which fell when the rescuers faced this hopeless wall.

William Morgan, a little Cornishman with the smile of sunlight in his blue eyes, guided by the craft a boyhood spent in the mines had given him, found a crevice big enough to admit a man's body between two great stones. "It may run back a foot or

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two, and it may reach clear in to them," said he. "I've known men to be rescued through such cracks as that, more than once."

They had made headway of some four feet against the cave-in. According to Jack Ryan's calculations not more than ten feet separated them from the imprisoned men. Quickly they removed the soft earth from the crevice as far as a long-handled shovel would reach. Then, "Somebody must creep in, lads, and open it up as far as it goes," said Jack. "Let ye snap the handle out of wan o' thim crazy shovels and make it so a man can wield it in the hole."

"No need," said Jimmy Kennedy; "here's Mollie. I'll go in with her and open the hole."

William Morgan protested. "I'm younger and nimbler than you, Jimmy," said he, "and I can handle myself in a cramped place. I'm goin' in."

Jimmy firmly pushed him aside. "There's no one at home lookin' for me this night. Thim stones may shut their teeth any minute, and if they do, the livin' worruld can better spare an owld lad than a young one."

Like a miner, Jimmy Kennedy plied Mollie in the narrow hole, driving her by the light of a lantern wedged under the hollow of his arm, spreading the wet earth beneath him, passing it back to the reach of those on the outside. Slowly he forged ahead. "The hole is widenin'," he reported. "I think I am past the rock."

"Come out o' that, thin, Jimmy Kendeny!" ordered Jack. "Come out o' that, man, before it crooshes down on ye!"

"Listen!" Jimmy paused in his eager delving, straining at a faint sound, as of metal on stone, beyond the barrier. "They're livin'!" he shouted. "I hear 'em hammerin' on the rocks! I'll stay by ye, lads!" he called. "Me and Mollie will be through to ye soon, God kape back this gob o' mud above me head!"

"Come out o' that, Jimmy Kennedy!" roared Jack Ryan, on hands and knees like some grisly beast, at the mouth of the little tunnel. "It's meself that's goin' in to relave ye!"

"Get out o' here, John Ryan!" panted Jimmy, pushing and twisting Mollie as she never had been worked before. "I have no wind to waste on words, and Herself and five of thim depindin' on ye! Get out o' here!"

It was plain that he had driven his tunnel beyond the protecting walls of stone. All around him was the yielding clay, clods of which fell from the roof upon his head and shoulders as he groveled upon his belly and pushed the opening onward by slow and weary inches. "Life is good, even to an owld lad," said Jimmy Kennedy to himself, "but I can best be spared if God wills that I am not to reach thim."

Rock ahead, a great block of it, squarely across his way, and on the other side of it the tapping signal of the hammer. Jimmy Kennedy could feel the vibration of the blows as he pressed his hand against the stone. His head and shoulders were well past the crevice through which he had come, lying in an insecure bore through loose earth which might come down with the next breath. He felt over the face of the impeding stone. It was not a thick block. Above it, a hand's span between them, lay another. In the interstice he began to work Mollie's thin blade, scooping out the loose earth with his hand when the shovel would no longer serve. At arm's length his hand broke through clear on the other side. The sound of the hammer on the stone came into his cell as through a door flung suddenly wide. Jimmy lifted his lantern to a level with the opening. "Are ye in there?" he called.

"We are!" sobbed a voice on the other side. "Praise be the Almighty that sent you!"

"Thin let yees lay howld of this stone and have her around out of the door!"

Outside, Jack Ryan's men were holding him. "Lave loose o' me, ye divils!" he howled, lashing about like a whale. "Lave me lay howld of the leg of Jimmy Kennedy yonder before he is crushed like th' shell of an egg!" They held him fast. "Come out o' that, thin, Jimmy Kennedy!" he begged. "Come into the clear an' lave me get the heave o' me shoulder agin the stone! Ye know, Jimmy Kennedy, that I have the stren'th of foive men in me!"

"Aisy, John Ryan, dear," wheedled Jimmy. "I'm as safe an' aisy as if I was on th' hand-car bound for home. Lay howld of her, men," said he, lowering his voice, to those beyond, "she may come down any minute an' shut ye off agin."

"We are crowded against the ledge," one answered, "and have little room to swing the stone around."

Jack Ryan's men had him flat upon the ground. Two of them kneeled upon each of his arms. "Come out, Jimmy Kennedy," he begged, "come out, me dear owld fri'nd!"

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"Ye must move it or stay where ye are!" said Jimmy Kennedy. They laid hold of it and began to heave. It gave to them. Jack Ryan heard the grinding of stone upon stone, and leaped to his feet, scattering those that clung to him like leaves.

"She's down upon him!" he shouted.

"We have thim safe, John Ryan, dear," Jimmy's cheerful voice assured. "I will pass ye my shovel now," said he to the imprisoned men, "and ye can open the hole a bit from that side. I have no room for more dirt out here. I'm comin' out, now, John Ryan," he called. "Bring Mollie, me shovel, with ye whin ye come, men."

He crept backwards into the clear. John Ryan gathered him in his arms as he came out, and nestled him as a child. Jimmy Kennedy smiled, whimsically, his old head weaving from side to side, and fainted dead away. For two hours he had toiled as living man never toiled before.

IV

"IT WOULD have been all up with us in half an hour more," Jimmy Kennedy heard the mountain man say as he opened his eyes. "We'd have been smothered."

"Did ye fetch owld Mollie out?" questioned Jimmy.

The rescued men repeated the question, one to another, with their eyes. "Why, no," said the mountain man, "I'm afraid we forgot the shovel."

"More shame to ye!" rebuked Jimmy Kennedy. "Well, will one o' ye kindly step in and fetch her?"

A little shiver ran over the crowd. "Speaking for myself," said the mountain man, "I wouldn't put my head in that hole again for all the shovels on earth! We owe you more than we can pay, old fellow, but let us show our gratitude in some other way."

"More shame to ye!" repeated Jimmy Kennedy bitterly, rising in great scorn. Before they had read his intention the old man was on his knees at the mouth of the little tunnel. The next moment he had scuttled in like a rat.

Jack Ryan held a lantern to light him out. "Have ye found her?" he called.

"I have that, John Ryan," Jimmy answered. They heard her blade ring on the stones as he came worming out.

A puff of outrushing air flickered the flame of the lantern Jack Ryan held. "For the love o' God, it's down on him!" he yelled. "Are ye there, Jimmy Kennedy?"

"I am that," Jimmy Kennedy answered cheerfully, "and I think I'll stop here some time, John. The dirt is down on the legs of me."

In at the tunnel's mouth clattered a hundred muckers and sandhogs, brought there on a relief train. Inside of an hour they had Jimmy Kennedy out, no worse for the wear, holding Mollie in his arms.

In course of a few days there came to Jimmy Kennedy, through Cafferty, roadmaster, tossed off the end of a train as he sped by, a letter. The president himself commended Jimmy Kennedy for his work of rescue in the tunnel. It was a kindly, human, friendly letter, and it closed by offering Jimmy Kennedy a place as gardener at the president's country home. Jimmy Kennedy read it, then passed it along to Jack Ryan.

"It's a great honor," said Jack, "a great and high honor, Jimmy Kennedy. And he makes ye the offer of forty dollars a mont'. Well, and are ye goin,' Jimmy Kennedy?"

Jimmy Kennedy drove Mollie into the earth with indignant gesture, cast abroad with asperity a shovelful of dirt, scattering it to the winds. "I *am* not, thin, John Ryan!" said he. "What th' divil does he think I am, a servant?"

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One Chance in a Thousand

by William Wallace Cook

CHAPTER I

THE PERAMBULATING MAP

FOR half an hour Pettigrew had been apostrophizing what he was pleased to call the "mighty Cordillera." Now the backbone of the continent is long enough, and high enough, to arouse a good deal of enthusiasm, but when a man has lived with it for sixteen months, and bit into it with a steam-shovel for four or five hundred working days, there is no excuse for such soaring sentiment as Pettigrew's.

"Quit it, Dan!" I called out to him.

Our *tambo* was two stories high, built of bamboo poles and thatched with plantain leaves. The second story, occupied by Pettigrew and myself, had two sides open to the weather. The furniture consisted of a trunk, two grass hammocks and a calabash.

Pettigrew turned his back on the distant mountains and went over and dropped on the trunk.

"What's the matter with you, Jules?" he inquired reproachfully. "Have you sunk all appreciation of the beautiful and sublime in that big ditch between Colon and Panama? My friend, my dear friend——"

"Oh, splash!" I interrupted. "This huddle of huts called Quibdo is getting on my nerves. You prevailed on me to throw up a good job, help you buy a motor-boat and come down here from Cartagena at the head of the Gulf of Darien. You had a tip that there was gold around the headwaters of the Atrato, and that tip only half told the glittering truth. You couldn't help it because the launch was wrecked and all we saved was a trunk and a barrel of gasoline. Your intentions were all to the good, Dan, but—well, there's a place hotter than this that's paved with good intentions."

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He studied me reflectively. "We've panned the bars for two weeks, Jules," he observed finally, "and that calabash over there is full of nuggets. We couldn't have made that much in a year, on the Isthmus."

"Gold, yes," I muttered; "we've got it, and we can keep on getting it, but I wouldn't stay another two weeks in this God-forsaken region for the joint bank-account of Rockybilt and Vandefeller."

"Jules," and there was something almost plaintive in Pettigrew's voice, "you miss the rugged simplicity, the homely but admirable excellence of a life so close to nature."

"I'm not missing a thing, Dan," I answered, "not even the lepers who take such a prominent part in the rugged simplicity of Quibdo, or the stagnant humidity that rots our clothes overnight, mildews our shoes, and does other things to round out the admirable excellence of this festering spot on the map. No wonder the gold has stayed right here during all the years that have passed since Humboldt and Trautwine discovered it."

Pettigrew shook his head in mute protest.

"Furthermore," I proceeded, "the Colombians don't like the Yankees any too well since we raided them for the Republic of Panama. The Quibdo alcalde is watching us. Even if the fever should leave us alone, I doubt whether the alcalde will let us get away with the gold we're taking from the river-bars."

"I believe," said Pettigrew slowly, "that you're suffering from an attack of neurasthenia."

"Maybe," I returned. "Anyhow, Dan, I wouldn't trade ten minutes of Broadway for ten years of this musty El Dorado. I'm going out!"

"When?" he asked.

Before I could answer I saw the notched bamboo poles that led to our airy apartment begin to shiver and shake. Some one was coming up.

"I shouldn't wonder," said I gruesomely, "if that's the alcalde now."

But I was wrong. A *jipi-japa* hat showed above the floor of the landing-stage, quickly followed by some five-feet six of Chinaman in a cotton kimono and baggy trousers. He carried a small tin pail.

To my certain knowledge there were no Chinamen living in Quibdo. This man was a stranger and, consequently, his visit was mildly diverting.

"Hello, John!" beamed Pettigrew, rising from the mildewed trunk and approaching our visitor. "Where have you come from?"

"You gottee milk?" he inquired, holding up his pail. "My tly gettee milk, no ketchee. Savvy China boy's pidgin?"

"This isn't a dairy, John," said Pettigrew mildly. "I don't believe you can fill that pail with milk short of Cartagena, two hundred and fifty miles north."

A depressed look crossed the Chinaman's face. He shuffled around in his straw sandals and seemed to have something on his mind.

"Where'd you come from?" inquired Pettigrew.

"Missul Blainblidge," was his illuminating reply, with a stealthy look off toward the low hills on the west.

"'Blainblidge?'" echoed Pettigrew. "Who the deuce is 'Blainblidge?'"

"Him my boss. My workee fo' Missul Blainblidge."

"Then he must be a recent arrival," muttered Pettigrew. "Where is he?"

The Celestial waved a hand indefinitely in the direction of the hills.

"This is interesting, Jules," went on my friend. "This newcomer may be American, and it devolves on us to find him and welcome him. The Chink will show us the way."

"You gottee half-dol'?" inquired the Chinaman abruptly.

"I guess we could dig up four-bits," said Pettigrew; "but why?"

"My wanchee. You givee China boy fitty cent, him makee show map." There was another stealthy glance in the direction of the hills. "Heap fine map," the yellow man added.

"This has all the dips, angles and spurs of a mystery, Jules," commented Pettigrew, turning to open the trunk and remove a small bag of jingling silver. "I'm going to fall for this confidence game."

He extracted a coin from the bag and tossed it to the Chinaman. The latter bit it to make sure it was genuine, then dropped it into the pail and set the pail on the floor. Another moment and he had stripped off his cotton blouse and was backing toward Pettigrew, his yellow body nude to the waist.

"Great guns!" gasped Pettigrew. "Come here a minute, Jules!"

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THERE were tattoo-marks all over the Chinaman's back, from his neck to his waist. I had seen sailors etched with spread-eagles, anchors, ships and other devices, but never before had I seen a living man decorated as was that Chinaman. There were red rivers and blue mountains describing tortuous courses across his yellow skin, and to the right of his spinal column, not far from the center of the chart, was a five-pointed star.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed Pettigrew. "Why, Jules, this fellow is a walking map! It's a rough draft of a section of country that looks familiar. Isn't this the Atrato River, Jules?"

With his forefinger Pettigrew traced out a crooked red line that ended at the back of the Chinaman's neck.

"That's the Atrato, sure enough, Dan," I declared. "And here's the Quito running into the Atrato, and on the bluff where the two streams unite is this town of Quibdo. Great Scott! Who needled such a diagram on the Chinaman's back? What was the reason of it?"

Pettigrew's breath came quick and hard as he laid a finger on the five-pointed star. "There's something in that place, Jules," he averred, "something that's *worth while!*"

"I wouldn't bank on it, Dan. This tattooing was done a long time ago, and if the Chinaman has been as anxious to exhibit it to others as he has to us, the mystery of that star has already been solved."

The Chinaman twisted his head around.

"One piecee chance allee same one thousan'," said he; "you ketchee, you havee—no findee, no ketchee. Plaps no can do. Can do, you makee lichee man chop-chop. Savvy pidgin?"

"What's this perambulating diagram trying to get at?" I growled.

Pettigrew was a man of parts. I might quarrel with his sentimental notions, but I took off my hat to his versatility. His knowledge seemed to run the gamut of human endeavor. He was only thirty-five, and how he had ever managed to collect it all was a source of unceasing wonder. Very naturally, therefore, I turned to Pettigrew in the present emergency. To my astonishment I found him at a loss.

"It's easy to savvy his pidgin," mused Pettigrew, rubbing his chin reflectively. "There's one chance in a thousand to do something or to get something. If we do it, or get it, then we'll become rich in a hurry."

"The quicker the better," said I. "I'm starting north to-morrow, and if I could hit the States well off it would be another dream come true."

"But why a map on a living Chinaman?" asked Pettigrew fretfully. "He comes here for a quart of milk and sells us a look at his back for four-bits. What's the sense of it?"

I was on the point of suggesting that Pettigrew cross-examine the Celestial diagram, when the tops of the notched poles once more began to shake.

The Chinaman gave a jump and scrambled into the cotton blouse; then he picked up the pail, pouched the silver piece, and his face went blank and his manner grew listless.

A solar hat with a *pugree* showed over the landing-stage. Under the hat was a thin face framed in a stubble of grayish beard. A wiry man in khaki and puttees swung over the edge to the floor and rushed at the Chinaman.

"You pig-tailed heathen!" shouted the man in khaki. "Trying to take French leave, eh? A nice run you've given me in this beastly climate!" He jerked off his solar hat and mopped his face with a handkerchief. "What are you doing with that pail, Yip?"

"You sendee China boy fo' milk," answered Yip humbly.

The man in khaki pulled himself together with a jerk, stared, drummed his knuckles against his forehead and then melted with a chagrined laugh.

"Wouldn't that keep you guessing?" said he. "I sent that Chinaman from the *cerro*, an hour since, to see if he could pick up a pail of milk somewhere. Hattie just got in from Buena Ventura this morning, and she likes her coffee with all the trimmings. Then I forgot about sending Yip Wing to the town and got the notion that he was trying to make a run of it. I hope, gentlemen, that each of you has a memory that can be depended on. I'm so full of one big subject that my mind is treacherous with everything else. I'm Bainbridge, Cardigan Bainbridge, just thirty days out of God's country—to be exact, I hail from the most favored spot in that favored land, *videlicit*, Chicago."

He pushed a hand at my friend.

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"Daniel Webster Pettigrew is mine," said my friend, taking the hand. "My partner here is Mr. Jules Leffingwell."

"Glad to know you, Mr. Pettiwell! Mr. Leffingrew, your most obedient!"

CHAPTER II

NIGHT SIGNALS

WE INVITED Bainbridge to take a seat on the trunk, and as our tobacco was running low we accepted some of his.

"Go back to camp, Yip," said Bainbridge as he lighted his pipe, "and tell Hattie that I'll be along presently."

"Awri'," answered the Chinaman, and dropped over the platform and down the shaking poles.

"Meaning no offense to you, gentlemen," said Bainbridge, flipping away his burnt match, "but if I had known there were any Americans in this town I'd never have sent Yip here. Did he—ah—did he ask you for fifty cents?"

"He did," answered Pettigrew.

Bainbridge studied his smoking pipe with a perturbed air. "That yellow rascal," he observed finally, "can't be trusted. I suppose he showed you what was on his back?"

"He did," and I saw a glimmer of hope in Pettigrew's eyes as he cocked them at our visitor through the fog.

"Never mind him," went on the Chicago man deprecatingly, "let is pass. Yip is half-cracked, and his stock in trade, up to the time I met him, was his tattooed epidermis. There's a get-rich-quick microbe in all of us, Mr. Pettileff, and it feeds on such foolishness and sometimes leads to rainbow-chasing. Well, well,"—he waved his pipe as though dismissing a subject unworthy of attention—"we're sensible men, aren't we?" he anxiously added. "And not to be hooked by cock-and-bull stories of treasure?"

The glimmer of hope died out of my friend's eyes. What Bainbridge knew about that tattooed map he was keeping to himself.

"It's a peculiar map, Mr. Bainbridge," fenced Pettigrew, "and a peculiar place for a map."

"So it is, so it is," murmured Bainbridge. Suddenly he pushed forward on the trunk. "Did I send that Chinaman back to the *cerro*," he inquired, "or did I tell him to keep on hunting through Quibdo for a man with a cow?"

"You sent him back to the *cerro*," Pettigrew replied, throwing a glance of mild surprise in my direction.

"That's what I thought, but I wasn't sure. It's awful, gentlemen, to be so wrapped up in one idea that you can't keep your wits on anything else. You're from the States too, eh? I can tell that from the look of you. What part?"

We had nothing to conceal and we were so glad to see a countryman that we told him all about ourselves. What seemed to capture most of Bainbridge's interest was my remarks concerning the attitude of the Colombians toward American gold-seekers.

"I suppose," said Bainbridge, "that an American wouldn't be allowed to take a stake—quite a *large* stake—out of the country?"

"I don't know," frowned Pettigrew. "The alcalde here is mighty inquisitive and none too friendly, but it might be managed."

"Never!" I declared. "You'd have to whack up with every alcalde or bunch of soldiers you met between here and Cartagena. By the time you reached the Gulf of Darien you wouldn't have anything left for yourself."

At that moment Bainbridge began to shake. The *pugree* jumped and danced around his shoulders, his teeth chattered, his knees knocked together and his elbows pounded his ribs.

"Con-con-confound it," he chattered, "h-h-here it is ch-ch-chill-time and I'm t-t-two m-m-miles from a d-d-dose of quinine. I'll have to g-g-get back to the *c-c-cerro*."

Pettigrew and I helped him down. We would have gone farther and given him a lift to the *cerro*, but he made it rather plain that he'd prefer to have us remain at the *tambo*.

We watched him vanish among the squalid huts, shivering and staggering, and then slowly remounted to our quarters.

"He's got a bad memory," growled Pettigrew, "but he never forgets himself when that map is up for discussion."

"He's here hunting treasures," said I. "Yip Wing and his tattooed back are his guides."

"Undoubtedly."

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"You saw how worried he was when I mentioned the hostile attitude of the Colombians?"

"Not so much worry as speculation. He knew about the hostile attitude of the Colombians before."

"You think he's got a way for getting around it?"

"Well, if he hasn't, he thinks he has."

"Is it possible the absent-minded idiot forgot himself so far as to bring a woman into this sinkhole of leprosy and fever?"

"Evidently," said Pettigrew calmly.

I SAID hard things about the Chicago man under my breath. Pettigrew rolled out of his hammock to open the trunk and produce a pack of moist and sticky playing-cards. Whenever he was puzzled he fell back on cribbage. We were driven from the game by the Quinchua landlady below getting our supper.

She built a fire on the mud-floor and allowed the smoke to find its own way out of the chimneyless hovel. Most of it came up through wide cracks into our quarters. Usually we weathered the smother by hanging out through the open sides of our apartment.

As Pettigrew hung out, that evening, he held in his hands our fieldglasses. He was looking in the direction of the *cerro*. A *cerro* is what is known, in the States, as a "hogback." This particular *cerro* was bare of timber and brush, save for three palm trees almost in the middle of it. The view across the low grounds offered no obstructions.

"What do you make out?" I asked.

"There's a white tent at the foot of the palm trees," Pettigrew reported.

"See any people?"

"Three. One is Bainbridge, I suppose, and another the Chinaman. The third looks like a woman."

"Miss Hattie," I said, with a sudden access of regret for her presence on the *cerro*.

"Why 'Miss'?" my friend queried. "Why not 'Mrs.'?"

I relapsed into silence. A little later Mrs. Quinchua screeched up at us and we went down for our calabash of *locro* and cooked plantain.

All our work on the gravel-bar was done in the morning, when physical exertion could be tolerably endured. Afternoons and evenings were one long *siesta*, likewise tolerably endured. With the coming of night, we roosted on our floor-edge, trying to kill the pestilential odors of the town with pipes and tobacco. Suddenly we saw lights winking on the crest of the *cerro*.

"What do you call that, Jules?" asked Pettigrew.

"*Cucujos*, maybe," I answered. These were brilliant fireflies that streaked dazzlingly through the shadows of the town.

"No, Jules," declared Pettigrew, "those lights hang one above the other and the colors are being manipulated. By Jupiter, the people on the *cerro* are signaling—by the Ardois method!"

I knew, by that, that Pettigrew was tapping his reservoir of garnered knowledge. "What's that?" I inquired.

"Why, it's a method of night signaling, used at sea. The lights hang vertically. The top one is red, the one below is white, the third is red and the fourth is white. The letter 'P.' Ah, they're changing!"

The lower light was blotted out. The two upper ones were white and the third was red. "'L,'" announced Pettigrew. "I'll read 'em off, Jules," he added, "and you keep track of them."

They were slow in coming because the manipulation must have required considerable work. In half an hour the lights had faded into blank darkness, but they had spelled the message:

P-l-e-a-s-e c-o-m-e o-v-e-r i-m-m-e-d-i-a-t-e-l-y.

Pettigrew jumped to his feet and rushed through the gloom to the trunk. When he came back he handed me a revolver and tucked another into his waist-band.

"That's a call for us, Jules!" he cried, scrambling for the notched poles.

CHAPTER III

THE WOMAN IN CHARGE

A DUGOUT canoe carried us across the Quito River. On the opposite bank we took a native path through the marsh lands and came presently to the slope of the *cerro*.

The ridge-like hill was a hundred feet high. The tall, tufted palms, the tent and vague heaps of *impedimenta* stood out in sharply defined silhouette against the night sky. A dull glow of light struck through

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the canvas walls of the tent. Not far from the place where we started up the slope was a herd of mules.

"Bainbridge must have brought a lot of baggage with him," remarked Pettigrew. "This work of his bears all the ear-marks of a carefully planned expedition."

"The rankest kind of foolishness," said I, "if he's really after treasure. How could he ever expect to get out of Colombia with such a caravan?"

"We're wanted at the top of the *cerro*, Jules. Maybe we'll secure some definite information when we get there."

An easy slope, bare and smooth, lay before us. A few minutes brought us to the top of it and, as we stepped to the level crest, a shadowy form hastened toward us from the tent.

"Mr. Pettiwell!" called a voice. It was a woman's voice, clear as a bell. "Hattie Bainbridge!" I thought, my pulses quickening.

"Pettigrew, madam, Pettigrew," answered my companion. "My friend here is Mr. Leffingwell."

A low, flute-like laugh came from the woman. "That's about as near as dad ever gets anything," said she. "You saw the lights?" she asked. "Good! It was taking a long chance, and I am glad to find you gentlemen so resourceful. You will forgive me for appealing to you? You are Americans, and so are we, and that was my only reason. I was put out with dad because he didn't invite you over when he met you in Quibdo; but, as might have been expected, he forgot to be neighborly. I am Hattie Bainbridge," she added.

We expressed our pleasure at meeting a countrywoman. There, in the semi-gloom on the *cerro*, we could see Miss Bainbridge only indistinctly, but I knew that she was young, and fair, and had more determination than commonly falls to her sex.

"We thought," remarked Pettigrew, "that you and your father might be in difficulties and that you needed help."

"Oh, dear, no!" she answered. "We are facing a difficulty, but not one that brings personal peril."

A brief silence followed. With growing embarrassment, Pettigrew and I awaited further developments; the girl, apparently, was deliberating the subject of her next remark.

"How did you manage the Ardois lights?" inquired Pettigrew, by way of relieving the tension.

"That was easy," Miss Bainbridge answered. "I had the *arriero* and Yip Wing fasten eight lanterns, four with red globes and four with white, to the trunk of one of the palms. They stood on a ladder with squares of cloth and they veiled and unveiled the lights as I directed. It was rather a clumsy proceeding, but it was my own idea."

"The most remarkable thing about it, Miss Bainbridge, is your knowledge of the Ardois signals."

"I have two cousins in Chicago, one in the militia and the other in the naval reserve. They have each taught me a good many things a woman isn't supposed to understand. In return, I gave them instructions in telegraphy."

Certainly she had a wide range of accomplishments. All that remained, now, was for her to declare a leaning toward poetry and she would go to the head of the highbrow class, very close to Pettigrew. A dash of pique, or something else that was equally unpleasant, gripped hard at my mediocre mind.

"Ah," splashed Pettigrew, "then you are conversant with the wire, the key, and the Morse code?"

"I am a wireless telegraph operator," she answered, "and have had a position in New Orleans for several months. If you gentlemen can spare me a little of your time this evening I should like to tell you something of our work here and see if you can help us."

"We are entirely at your service, Miss Bainbridge," said Pettigrew handsomely, doffing his hat and bowing. "Mr. Leffingwell intends leaving, to-morrow, for the Gulf of Darien and New York, but I shall remain and you may count on me to do whatever I can to assist you."

"There's nothing sure about my getting away to-morrow," I put in hastily. "I should be glad to delay leaving, Miss Bainbridge, and give you any aid in my power."

"Thank you, thank you both ever so much! There are chairs under the palm trees and if you will come over there we can be more comfortable while we talk. Father isn't at all well this evening, and Yip Wing is taking care of him in the tent."

We went to one of the palms. Three or four canvas chairs were grouped at a dis-

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tance from its foot, where the shade of its tufted top had last covered them. We seated ourselves and, while the dank, stagnant vapors floated up from the Quito, and the *cucujos* traced fiery patterns in the gloom around us, we listened to the novel particulars of a venture whose end and aim were kept studiously in the background.

"I must tell you at the beginning," said Miss Bainbridge, "that my father and I are here as the representatives of a stock company." She paused, and there was the hint of a laugh in her voice as she resumed. "The company is called The Yip Wing Development Association, and has a capital stock of twenty-five thousand dollars. My father and I, between us, own thirteen thousand dollars' worth of the stock, which gives us a controlling interest. My father is president of the company, and I am secretary, treasurer and general manager. Our object is to develop further knowledge of that odd map which the Chinaman has been carrying around with him for so many years. I am told that you have seen the map. It is our purpose to reach the place indicated by the five-pointed star, and to get safely out of the country with what we hope to find there."

There was a businesslike air about this fair treasure-seeker which completely won Pettigrew and me. But, even apart from that, the bizarre nature of an enterprise founded on such a perambulating diagram would have held our attention enthralled.

"I knew, before our expedition started," continued Miss Bainbridge, "that the people of this country were not very friendly toward Americans from the States. How we were to get safely away after we had accomplished what we came for was the question. My answer to that was the aeroplane."

"A-a-aeroplane?" gasped Pettigrew.

"Why not?" returned Miss Bainbridge. "From all I have been able to learn, this is a marvelous country for aeroplane-flying. Being hemmed in by mountains, there is never any wind to speak of. A practicable biplane, capable of carrying a driver and two passengers, is part of our equipment. It was brought from Buena Ventura in sections, and all that remains is to put the sections together. The machine was constructed especially for us. I believe," she added, "that modern methods, correctly applied, can accomplish anything that's worth accomplishing."

"Are—are *you* going to drive the aeroplane, Miss Bainbridge?" inquired Pettigrew faintly.

"I may have to," she answered, "unless either you or Mr. Leffingwell can take the work off my hands. This aeroplane question—which may be vital to the success of our enterprise—involves several difficulties. I shall have to go into it a little deeper before you can understand.

"FOR six months we have been preparing for this expedition. From the very first I saw the necessity of either a dirigible or an aeroplane. I should have preferred a dirigible, but the cost was too great. We had to fall back on a heavier-than-air machine. A man named Carlson, who knows all about every sort of flying-machine, was hired to superintend the construction of the *Phoenix* and to come to South America with us to act as pilot for the aeroplane."

She paused for a moment, and a little bitterness crept into her voice as she continued.

"Carlson proved a traitor. While pretending to be devoted to our interests, he made a copy of Yip Wing's map, organized a stock company of his own with four times the capital of the Development Association, constructed a dirigible airship and sent it to Cartagena, at the head of the Gulf of Darien. Then, when my father and I were ready to sail from New Orleans for Colon, on our way to Buena Ventura, Carlson suddenly showed his hand and refused to go with us. I found out all about Carlson's treachery from a man named Horne, who had been helping Carlson at Mobile.

"This man Horne had quarreled with Carlson about a matter of wages, and he came from Mobile to New Orleans just to see me and tell me about Carlson's double-dealing. It was a discouraging revelation. Dad and I had put every cent of our money in the Development Association, and to have Carlson beat us out with his treachery meant ruin.

"There are two ways of getting into this valley—by way of the Gulf of Darien, Cartagena and the Atrato River, and by way of Buena Ventura, the San Juan River and the Barro Blanco. We had made our preparations to cross the Isthmus with our

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luggage and sail in a British steamer from Panama to Buena Ventura. Carlson, of course, knew this, and Horne told us that he had schemed to come by way of the Gulf of Darien. Not the least discouraging part of the prospect, for dad and me, was the completeness of Carlson's equipment.

"His airship is the latest type of dirigible, and he took with him to Cartagena everything necessary for manufacturing the gas to inflate the balloon. Horne says that Carlson can carry provisions for himself and two other men, gasoline and oil for his motor, and remain in the air for two weeks —barring high winds and possible accidents. Two wireless instruments form part of his impedimenta. One of these, with an operator, is to be left at Cartagena, while the other is to be carried in the car of the dirigible. Thus, at every moment after leaving Cartagena in the airship, Carlson will be kept informed of the attitude of the Colombian Government. If there is danger to be apprehended from the authorities, Carlson and the two men with him will sail over Cartagena on their return from down the Atrato and try to reach the Republic of Panama, or perhaps some port in Central America.

"All this information was given to us by Horne. Dad and I could only hope to defeat Carlson by reaching the five-pointed star ahead of him. And it was necessary that we should find another navigator for the *Phoenix*. I sent dad ahead on the Fruit Company's steamer, with instructions to cross the Isthums, sail from Panama for Buena Ventura according to plans, then ascend the San Juan to the town of San Pablo, cross the Barro Blanco by mule-train and wait for me on this *cerro*.

"For two weeks after dad left I was in New Orleans, wiring in very direction for an aeroplane driver to join us. But my efforts failed and I did not dare delay following dad any longer. I was a fortnight behind him in leaving Panama, but only a few days behind him in leaving Buena Ventura. So, gentlemen, here we are without a pilot for the *Phoenix*, and our success or failure may hang upon the use of the aeroplane. There was a chance—one chance in a thousand—that one of you might know how to drive a heavier-than-air machine."

She had hurried along in her recital with all the impetuous fervor of a spirit formed for high emprise. It was evident that she was the brains and the guiding hand of that expedition, and equally evident that she was keeping her eye single to the result she hoped to accomplish. That she, a woman, could have forced her way alone through the difficult country that lay between Buena Ventura and Quibdo, showed remarkable determination and wonderful powers of endurance. My admiration grew as I listened; also, I was astounded at this double attack on an Andean mystery by means of an aeroplane and a dirigible balloon.

"I can drive an automobile," said Pettigrew, a spasm of regret in his voice, "but I don't know the first thing about keeping an aeroplane right-side up. How about you, Jules?"

"Flying has always appealed to me," I answered, "but I've never had a chance to try it. How long would it take us to learn, Dan?"

"I don't think it would take long—we have both a knack for picking up things. For one, I'll risk my own neck before I'll allow Miss Bainbridge to risk hers."

"So will I!" I returned heartily, in no mood to let myself be outdone by Pettigrew.

"Thank you, thank you!" said Miss Bainbridge. "We will consider that later. Before the *Phoenix* is put together and tried out, another difficulty must be overcome. In order to save transportation charges, dad was to secure a supply of gasoline in Buena Ventura. He forgot it. I have not found any fault with him for that, because I think he did very well indeed to get all our equipment to the *cerro*. Nevertheless, gasoline is as important, in its way, as a pilot, if the aeroplane is to be used. If——"

Impulsively Pettigrew interrupted her to tell of the barrel of gasoline we had saved from our wrecked motor-boat. Miss Bainbridge was delighted. While she was expressing her happiness over this unexpected stroke of fortune, we were all lifted from our chairs by a weird crash and crackle and a sudden sputter of blue sparks. These came from the farthest of the three palm trees and were followed by a yell of terror.

A form raced toward us through the gloom. Pettigrew happened to be nearer the form than I was and grabbed it with both hands.

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CHAPTER IV

A CLUE BY WIRELESS

"IT'S Yip Wing," said Miss Bainbridge, coming close and scrutinizing the captive. "There's no dependence to be placed on him at all. He was told to stay in the tent and look after dad, but he left and went loitering around our wireless station."

"My no likee devil-machine!" chattered the frightened Yip Wing. "Him one piecee bad pidgin! My makee go to tent, Missy Hattie; makee stay in tent!"

He had sunk to his knees. Pettigrew had him by the queue and he now lifted him to the feet by a strong pull that brought a cry of distress from the inquisitive Celestial. "Go back to the tent and stay there, or I'll cut off your queue. Now, clear out and mind your pidgin!"

He helped Yip Wing toward the tent with a push that was none too gentle and turned to Miss Bainbridge. "I can see with half an eye, Miss Bainbridge," he observed, "that you need Jules and me for more things than running the aeroplane. We don't know just what you're trying to do in this Atrato country, but you're from the U. S., and that's good enough recommendation for *us*. We'll keep order in this camp, and we'll furnish the gasoline for the aeroplane and do our best to fly the machine for you. Jules and I are soldiers of fortune, as you might say, and it makes small difference to us where we go or what we do, so long as there's an opportunity for honest gain."

"Dad and I were lucky indeed to find two of our countrymen in Quibdo," said Miss Bainbridge, "and it is kind of you to offer to help us when you know so little about the object of our expedition. You will be well repaid for your trouble, however, in case we succeed in our work. But," she finished, turning the subject rather abruptly, "I ought to be giving my time to the wireless apparatus. Will you come this way, please?"

She moved off toward the palm where had occurred the recent demonstration of noise and blue sparks.

"Your father brought a wireless instrument with him, as well as an aeroplane?" inquired Pettigrew.

I was struck, no less than my comrade, with the way the Yip Wing Development Association was sounding the key-notes of progress in its world-old treasure-hunt on the Atrato.

"After my talk with Horne, in New Orleans," answered Miss Bainbridge, "I added a wireless machine to our equipment—a machine of the same make as Carlson's."

By the time she had finished speaking we were at the foot of the tree. The confused blur of equipment at the tree's foot presently resolved itself, under a lantern's light, into a table and a near-by box, both heaped with component parts of the "wireless" outfit. Pettigrew, who was tolerably well informed on this as well as on a thousand and one other matters, hovered close to the girl and gazed at the complicated device with much interest.

She hung the lantern to a nail in the tree-trunk, clamped a cage-like thing over her head and sat down in the chair. "You'll excuse me," she said, "if I go on duty? Close attention to the wireless, at this stage of affairs, may spell success or failure for the expedition. We have still six shares of our capital stock which have not been disposed of. I offer you gentlemen these six shares if you will move from Quibdo to the *cerro* and identify yourselves completely with our work. Will you think about this and let me know your decision in the morning?"

The light from the lantern fell over her face bewitchingly. It was not a particularly beautiful face but marvelously strong and attractive. Over her white forehead and light hair the "wireless" helmet shimmered like so many bands of silver.

"Never mind the stock, Miss Bainbridge," bubbled Pettigrew with reckless gallantry. "We will bring over our trunk, our calabash and our barrel of gasoline in the morning and do what we can to help make this expedition a success."

"Thank you," she answered, "but I shall insist on giving you the stock."

She closed down the ear-phone she had slightly raised, held a handkerchief to each side of her head and leaned forward with both elbows on the table. Miss Bainbridge had given us a good deal of her time, but now she was busy and we were dismissed.

Pettigrew caught my arm and drew me away toward the edge of the *cerro*. "What do you think, Jules?" he murmured, as we stood looking out over the dusky, malarious marsh toward the Quito and the indistinguishable hovels of the town beyond.

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"Principally," I answered, "I like your nerve. Six shares of stock in a company of rainbow-chasers is small enough pay for risking our necks in an aeroplane, and yet—'Never mind the stock, Miss Bainbridge,'" I mocked. "Sometimes, Dan, you're the limit!"

"She gave all her attention to me and you don't like it," he chuckled.

"Piffle!" said I. "You always monopolize the spot-light and I hang back merely to see how far you'll go. I've a feeling, Jules, that you and I are going to hit one of the peaks of your 'mighty Cordillera' with that flying-machine. I hesitate to go into details about the result. Sailing an airship is vastly different from handling a South Milwaukee steam-shovel."

"If that's the way you feel about it, Jules," he rambled, "I guess I could hold down the job of aviator for the Development Association. If you like, you can take the calabash and start north in the morning, and I'll——"

"No, you don't," I interrupted. "No one shall ever say that I didn't treat you as a pard, even if you do show a disposition now and then to look upon me as a hired man."

"You're a pessimist," said Pettigrew sadly.

"Well, yes," I admitted, "if trading my future prospects for three shares of stock in a Chinese map and the treasure of the Incas can make anything of a man."

"Let it pass," he murmured patiently. "Ought we to call at the tent and ask how Mr. Bainbridge is getting along? He'll probably expect us to show a friendly interest in him."

"Let that pass, too," I answered. "He has probably forgotten all about us by this time. We'd better go and settle our bill with Misia Quinchua. No matter what happens to us on the *cerro*, it's going to be a big relief to get away from that everlasting *locra* and the lepers. Let's see how quick we can move."

"Bravo! You're a good fellow at heart, Jules, and you always have to do just about so much vaporing before you settle down to business. We'll——"

A CRY came from behind us. It was the voice of Miss Bainbridge calling us back. A hiss and rattle accompanied the call, and it died in a crash of sound and a wild buzzing like a swarm of bees. Also there was a display of fireworks that brought my heart into my throat.

"Something has exploded!" I yelled, starting for the wireless station at a run.

"Explosion nothing!" answered Pettigrew, racing along beside me. "She's sending. She's caught a message out of the air and is answering it."

A weird scene was being enacted under that palm tree. Miss Bainbridge had risen from her chair and was leaning over the table, working a big lever up and down with one hand. Her face, brightly illuminated by blue flames exploding across the "spark-gap," was a study in concentrated interest and curiosity. From the ends of the lofty aerials dropped flaming balls.

It was with a feeling of relief that I saw her release the lever, flutter a hand toward Pettigrew and me in token of silence, and drop back in her chair. For a few moments her hands pressed the phones fiercely against her ears; then she picked up a pencil and began writing on a piece of blank paper.

Presently she ceased her pencil work, removed the helmet and turned to us. "I captured a message," said she.

"From Carlson?" breathed Pettigrew.

"No; but it's from Carlson's wireless station at Cartagena. The American consul was calling the Colon navy-yard. Colon didn't answer, so I—I answered and told him to go ahead."

"You made the consul think he was talking with the navy-yard?" I inquired.

"I intended to tell him his mistake, but," she added wearily, "I guess it's hardly necessary now. Read that, Mr. Pettigrew."

She handed him the paper on which she had written out the message. Pettigrew stepped closer to the foot of the tree and leaned forward to get the paper close to the lantern. Then he read aloud:

"Carlson believed to be a gun-runner. Authorities here have taken possession of wireless plant. Airship left yesterday for up the Atrato. River gunboat started in pursuit. Relay Washington. Will advise further. HUBBARD, Consul."

"This means——?" queried Pettigrew, lowering the paper and staring at the girl.

"It means," answered Miss Bainbridge dejectedly, "that Carlson, in the airship, will have picked up that message with his

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wireless machine and, being forewarned, can dodge the gunboat. Instead of finding Carlson, the gunboat will find *us!* I can't ask you gentlemen to share our peril. You had better go back to Quibdo and—and stay there."

CHAPTER V

HURRYING PREPARATIONS

I HAD the satisfaction, at least, of forestalling Pettigrew. While he was still debating the terms of his protest, I registered my own.

"Miss Bainbridge," said I, in my best manner, "the information you have just received only makes the venture all the more attractive. Speaking for myself, I decline to let a two-by-four Colombian gunboat cut me out of three shares of stock. I consider myself enlisted for the war and will not desert."

"Thank you, Mr. Leffingwell," and Miss Bainbridge turned toward me gratefully.

"Jules expresses my own sentiments, Miss Bainbridge," spoke up Pettigrew. "We must insist on seeing the expedition through its difficulties."

"I am grateful to you both," answered Miss Bainbridge. "While I am not at liberty to disclose the purpose of the expedition, it is but fair to inform you that there is only a slender chance for success—one who ought to know declares there is only one chance in a thousand. Don't you think you should take a little time to reflect before you cast in your fortunes with ours? The coming of this gunboat is bad enough, but there is the other fact that our own State Department seems to be against us."

"But this is not a gun-running expedition," said Pettigrew, "even if Carlson's has developed into such a lawless foray."

"Certainly *not!*" the girl returned vehemently. "But Carlson is not a gun-runner. It would be natural for the authorities, seeing a man act as Carlson must have acted, to suspect him of trying to aid or inspire a rebellion."

"Then," declared Pettigrew, "the Colombian authorities won't have any cause to interfere with you or with Carlson. Although," he added suggestively, "it might be a good idea if we could help them to interfere with Carlson."

"How could a gunboat cause an airship any trouble?" she inquired. "If Carlson flies high enough, or over a locality where bullets can not reach him, it seems to me he can defy the gunboat."

"Airships are not dependable," argued Pettigrew. "Nothing is more certain than that Carlson will meet with accidents and have to come down for repairs. Such a mishap would give the gunboat its chance. Besides, the valley of the Atrato is comparatively narrow. If Carlson gets out of sight of the gunboat, he'll have to climb fifteen thousand feet in the air to get over the Andes; and if he tries to dodge away to the west, he'll have to get over the Pacific Ocean. Believe me, Miss Bainbridge, he'll stick to the valley."

"If he keeps toward the five-pointed star," went on the girl, "the officers on the gunboat may guess what he is after; if they should then take measures to have the Gen—the treasure more strongly guarded, our plans would be defeated as well as Carlson's. But let us suppose that Carlson escapes the gunboat. We know that he has already left Cartagena and that he is in the air and on the way to the star—while our aeroplane is still in the crates! And after it is taken from the crates and assembled, you gentlemen will have to learn to use it. That will take days, perhaps weeks!"

The note of discouragement was very plain in her voice.

"It might take some amateur aviators days or weeks, Miss Bainbridge, but not Jules and me. Forgive the boast, but we have a knack for learning things. As you remarked a while ago, this valley with its still air is an admirable place to learn flying with an aeroplane. We will make the most of our time. To that end, I would suggest that I begin uncrating the machine tonight. Your *arriero* can help me. Jules will go back to Quibdo, settle our account with our landlady and arrange to have our supplies brought to the *cerro*. By tomorrow sometime, if all goes well, we should be ready for our first flight."

"YOU inspire hopefulness, Mr. Pettigrew," said the girl. "It is clear that you and Mr. Leffingwell are men of affairs and accustomed to lead forlorn hopes. Let it be as you say, and we will do our best to win the goal in spite of

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the gunboat, and Carlson and all our other difficulties. I will go back to the wireless. Now that Carlson's Cartagena station is in the hands of the Colombian authorities there will probably not be many messages sent from it, but I may be able to pick up something from Colon. Was it very wrong of me to cut in and answer that navy-yard call?"

"Not at all, not at all," answered Pettigrew, hastily. "The American consul at Cartagena is misinformed regarding Carlson, so the news destined for Colon was useless to any one but ourselves. You did exactly right."

Once more Pettigrew led me off toward the slope of the *cerro*. "Get back to Quibdo, Jules," said he, "and have the stuff brought across the Quito the first thing in the morning. If the alcalde gets inquisitive or meddlesome, refer him to me."

I was not long in getting back to the *tambo*. After shinning up the bamboo poles and arranging the mosquito-bar over my hammock, I crawled into my bed to rest and think.

Where did Yip Wing come from originally? Why had the map been tattooed upon his back? How had he happened to fall into the hands of the Bainbridges? Inasmuch as the Chinaman was the source of all these queer proceedings, the questions with which I began bombarding myself were deeply interesting.

My baffled wits, turning from Yip Wing, concerned themselves with the treasure. What was it? Gold, of course. Was there ever a treasure-trove expedition without gold as the lure? The ancient Incas were the stock producers of nearly all the treasure cached in the Andes. There were many wild yarns about the way some of the old *caciques* had fooled Pizarro. Fables, all. Miss Bainbridge, I reflected, was too shrewd to be led away by such worn-out and discredited traditions.

If not Inca gold, then whose gold was it? Suddenly a light flashed in upon my dull wits. Pirate gold! The old plunderers of the sea had made the Caribbean their stamping ground; most of their rich pickings came from Panama, and the Gulf of Darien was notorious as a rendezvous. Kidd, Morgan, Stede Bonnet, Teach, Lolonois, Mary Read, Anne Bonny—my mind ran over all the notorious buccaneers of my early reading. Out of the lot I settled upon Sir Henry Morgan as the most likely pirate of them all to ascend the Atrato and bury plunder in that part of the country.

Eureka! Pirate gold—Morgan—pieces-of-eight from the sack of Panama! Feeling sure that I had the bull by the horns, I sank into slumbers that were violently disturbed by the boom of old carronades, the flapping of black flags through powder-smoke, the shrieks of women, the yells of men in stocking-caps and galligaskins, and other piratical sights and sounds too numerous to mention.

THE morning was hot, but I awoke in a cold sweat with a shrill yell ringing in my ears. I was out of the hammock in a wink, staring dazedly about me, my trusty six-shooter in hand.

But we had not been boarded. Misia Quinchua was doing the howling and shaking the bamboo poles. The morning *locra* was ready.

Following breakfast, I beat up the town for hands to convey the trunk and the barrel of gasoline to the Quito. This was too much like real work to appeal to any of the natives and half-bloods. The silver dollars, however, wrought their magic. Five natives, at a *peso* each, were inveigled into the undertaking.

The calabash, with its hoard, I strapped inside the mildewed trunk. It was lowered from the second story of the *tambo* with ropes. Both trunk and gasoline were in the dugout and we were well across the river before the alcalde was even thinking about getting up.

Pettigrew was waiting for me on the opposite shore. With him were the *arriero* and Yip Wing. They had brought two mules, and one of the animals was trailing a framework of bamboo poles. While the muleteer, the Chinaman and my hired helpers were rolling the gasoline on to the framework of poles and lashing it securely, Pettigrew asked about the alcalde.

"I thought I'd leave before he got up, Dan," said I.

"Good idea!" approved my *compadre*.

"Everything's first-chop over here. The aeroplane came K. D., from Buena Ventura. The minute the crates were off, it went together like anything. Say, Jules, the farther I get into this thing and see how thoroughly that girl made her preparations for this expedition, the more my

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surprise and admiration grow. She's a wonder!"

"We're a couple of wonders, too!" I grunted. "I wonder if you thought of that?"

"Haven't had time to think of it. Only had an hour's sleep last night. But the aeroplane's all together."

"Have you got it together *right?*" I demanded.

"I'll take my solemn Alfred on it!" he averred. "I had plenty of photographs and blue-prints to work from, and there can't be any mistake." He laughed. "My word, Jules, but we'll astonish the natives when we go winging up the valley!"

"If we don't fall on any of them I'll be satisfied."

At this moment the *arriero* signified that the gasoline and trunk were loaded and everything ready for the start. My five put off in the dugout for a return to the town. A glance across the river showed nearly the whole of Quibdo clustered on the bluff, watching us.

"The alcalde will pay us a visit before long, Dan," I prophesied. "He won't let all this excitement in his bailiwick get away from him."

"Let him come," chuckled Pettigrew.

The procession had started. The bamboo poles bent under the barrel of gasoline, and their dragging ends slipped and slithered over the boggy ground. In the lead was the mule with the trunk, a cowbell jingling around its neck.

"I know what this expedition is after, Dan," said I darkly.

"What?"

"Loot from Panama, brought up through the Gulf of Darien and cached at the five-pointed star."

"Never!" He halted to laugh at the folly of the notion. "Any fool can figure out that it's part of the lost treasure of the Incas we're heading for," he added. "And you can lay something handsome, Jules, that the Government will never let us get out of the country with it, if it can be helped. Colombia is strapped. The troubles of 1896 and 1902 have landed this republic on a financial reef. The stuff we've come for would probably pay the national debt."

"How much is the national debt?"

"About fourteen million dollars," he answered airily.

It was my turn to laugh, but by that time we had come so close to the *cerro* that the aeroplane had captured my attention. Perched on the edge of the hill's level top, its double set of wings reaching wide on each side, its forward steering-gear quivering outward and upward like the antennæ of some monstrous, Brobdingnagian insect, the mere sight of that machine was enough to fill me with the direst forebodings.

"That's the *Phoenix,* is it?" I inquired, pointing.

"That's the *Phoenix,* Jules," answered Pettigrew, with a great show of pride. "How do you like the looks of it?"

"It certainly has all the ear-marks of a fool-killer, Dan," I commented.

Before he could reply, a loud shout was wafted in our direction from the rear. We turned and saw an undersized figure in white, topped with a huge Panama hat, hurrying after us.

"The alcalde!" muttered Pettigrew.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST FLIGHT

THE alcalde was a pestiferous little beast in a white duck suit. He toiled not, and neither did he spin, for the perquisites of his office heaped wealth upon him without much effort on his part. From every man, woman and child who washed out the yellow dust the alcalde took his bit.

He called himself Don Bolivar, and traced his ancestry back, in an unsullied line, to the old *conquistadores.* I suspected that this family tree was a good deal of a "plant," but policy kept me from arguing the point with the Don.

From the moment Pettigrew and I had been cast up on the bank of the Quito with our trunk and our barrel of gasoline the Don had regarded us with an unfavoring eye. Forty silver "balboas," taken from the bag in the trunk and presented to the Don, had for a time disarmed his hostility; but, as the days passed without bringing any further offerings of "balboas," he had scratched our *tambo* off his visiting-list.

He had a handful of ragged and dusky soldiers to wait upon his imperious will—a military backing which enabled him to enforce respect. Pettigrew and I made a good deal of the alcalde whenever he gave us the chance, deferred to his proud

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lineage, exalted his importance, and patted his conceit on the back. The Don liked this, but he liked more the jingle of *pesos* and Panama "balboas" dropping into his open palm. I had felt for a week that we should never be able to leave Quibdo without an exchange of something more than small talk with the Don.

My eyes followed the course the alcalde had taken from the Quito, and halted at a group of three armed men lounging by the water's edge. He had left his bodyguard behind, but within call.

"He's primed for trouble, Dan," said I.

"Leave him to me," answered my friend confidently.

In a moment the Don was facing us. There was a white umbrella furled under his arm. "*Carramba!*" he panted, breaking out the umbrella. "So you are leaving, leaving Quibdo without so much as an *adios* for me, your friend and your protector!" He dropped the sunshade over his shoulder, flaunting its green lining in our faces. "Is is not so?" he demanded, rebuking us with his fishy eyes.

"*Pues qué, señor?*" answered Pettigrew, amiably. "Countrymen of ours have come to the *cerro*. Why should we not join them? Your Excellency does not object?"

"*Por Dios, señor,*" he returned, "who am I that I should object?" He spread out his hands and hunched up his shoulders. "It is the leaving, the going away without a little farewell that embitters the heart."

"We are not leaving for good," went on Pettigrew patiently. "We intended to call on you to-morrow."

"*Mañana sera otra dia*—to-morrow is another day," said the Don. He lifted his eyes to the top of the *cerro* and stared entranced at the aeroplane. "You will take me to your friends, no?"

"Certainly," came promptly from Pettigrew, "but I was intending to take our friends to call on your Excellency, and did not dream your Excellency would be so kind as to come to the *cerro*." Here was a crafty stroke, and I saw the alcalde stiffen and throw out his chest like a pouter pigeon. "We are honored," Pettigrew added, with a bow, "and our friends are honored. Shall I have the *arriero* bring one of the mules——"

The Don fluttered a deprecating hand. "I will walk, *amigo mio*," said he, "I will walk with you."

The trunk and the gasoline were already being unloaded on the crest of the hill. We started up at once, and were met by Miss Bainbridge.

"Miss Bainbridge," said Pettigrew, with a grandiloquent flourish, "allow me to present our good friend, his Excellency Don Ernesto Bolivar, alcalde of Quibdo. His distinguished presence here affords Jules and myself much pleasure."

The little alcalde bowed and scraped, and I saw the ghost of a smile twitching at the girl's lips. I wondered if she had any idea how much of a menace the Don might become under real or fancied provocation.

Miss Bainbridge was tactful, however. After a few words of greeting, she invited the alcalde, Pettigrew and me to the shade of one of the palms. Yip Wing placed in front of us a folding table, and the Don's face glowed delightedly when a plate of sweet crackers and a bottle of wine were brought by the Chinaman.

The Don had a weakness for the juice of the grape, and when one bottle was finished another was called for. Miss Bainbridge declined to participate in the libations, but sat by and smilingly talked while the Don filled and refilled his glass.

Our visitor was casting critical glances at the aeroplane, at the paraphernalia comprising the wireless station, at the tent, and at the little heaps of supplies that strewed the vicinity of the camp. His curiosity seemed to grow in direct ratio with the amount of wine he imbibed. "*Señorita,*" smirked the alcalde, "for why have you come to this hot country? You, who are accustomed to a fine *casa* in a great city of your own land? Is it not strange that you come to live in such a camp?"

I thought I detected a little color in the girl's face as she answered: "Tell me, your Excellency, are there any orchids in the valley of the Atrato River?"

"*Carramba!* Orchids!" The alcalde laughed softly. "You are hunting orchids, then? Why do you hunt orchids with such things?" He waved a hand toward the wireless equipment and toward the aeroplane. "Is it something new you have brought here from the great outside world?"

Pettigrew got up from his chair. "Señor," said he, "that machine over there is a mechanical bird. Jules and I are about to try it. If you——"

"Mechanical bird?" he repeated, po-

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litely incredulous. "*Ay de mi!* Who ever heard of such a thing!"

"If you care to sit here and watch," proceeded Pettigrew, "Jules and I will try and put the flying-machine through its paces for you."

The alcalde clapped his hands. "*Buenos!*" he cried. "Let us see, señor, what your mechanical bird can do."

Pettigrew beckoned to me and we started toward the *Phoenix*.

"Are we going to begin practising *now*, Dan?" I asked, paralyzed with astonishment.

"Why not, Jules?" he answered. "It's the coolest part of the day, and we have little time to lose. Personally, I don't believe it's much of a trick to learn how to manage one of these flyers. I've read a little in a book Miss Bainbridge brought with her, and really it seems very simple. Knock the bung out of that barrel and fill the tin pail with gasoline. I have oiled around, and will be filling the water-jacket."

With many forebodings I went about my work.

THE wings of the aeroplane were double, one being placed above the other. They were held apart by truss-rods, and wire guys crossed between the rods and made the whole framework tolerably firm and stable. There were two seats on the lower plane, a narrow footrest under each of them. To right and left of one of the seats were wooden levers. Behind the seats were the motor and gasoline-tank, and back of these again were two six-foot wooden propellers. A slender framework projected rearward from the planes and supported a vertical rudder. Underneath were runners, and a pair of pneumatic-tired bicycle wheels cushioned with powerful springs. A smaller wheel upheld the tail of the machine.

Pettigrew appeared from the midst of the aeroplane with an empty bucket just as I stepped forward with a pail of gasoline.

"Don't you think, Dan," I suggested, "that you had better make the first trip alone?"

"We're going to run the machine together," said he, "and that's the way we ought to begin."

"But if anything—er—should happen, both of us would be involved. If you went alone for the first time, you know, I'd be left to keep up the experiments. I might even profit by your mistakes," I added brightly.

"I don't like your line of talk, Jules," growled Pettigrew. "No accident is going to happen. We're going to fly low, and just skim across the top of the marsh. This thing is far less complicated than it looks, for any one who understands mechanics and especially autos and such, and I've certainly learned a lot these last twenty-four hours. I've been rehearsing in my mind all the levers and things and how to handle them quickly and surely in emergencies. If anything *should* go wrong, we'll not have more than four or five feet to drop. Give me that pail."

I handed him the pail and he crawled in over the lower plane once more. He was several minutes straining the gasoline into the tank. When he had finished, he switched on the spark and started the gasoline. The motor sputtered and popped and then settled down into a steady hum.

"What do you think of that?" he cried triumphantly. "She works like a top!"

"She does," I admitted. "Of course you know enough to start a motor, but how are you going to get the thing in the air?"

"We'll start the machine down the slope of the *cerro*, Jules," he explained, with idiotic confidence. "We'll be in the air, all right, before we get to the foot of the hill. Take your place—the right-hand seat."

He stepped around behind and stood by one of the propellers. I gave a last despairing look toward Miss Bainbridge and the alcalde. Both were greatly excited. They had risen from their chairs and were watching with rapt attention. With many forebodings, I crawled into my place and waited for what was next to happen.

"Turn the power into the propellers, Jules!" called Pettigrew. "It's the propeller-thrust that gives us our start."

I managed, with some directions from Pettigrew, to find the right lever, and he gave one of the propellers a whirl. The big screws began to thrash the air, turning swiftly and more swiftly and shrieking in a way that tried my nerves. The big planes shook and fluttered, and the entire machine bucked and struggled to get away.

Pettigrew rushed around to the front, dropped into the seat beside me, and caught

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a lever with each hand. I admired him then as I had never done before. There was a dash of pallor in his face, but he was as steady as a clock and recklessly determined.

"I'm going to kick off the brake, Jules!" he yelled. "Hang on!"

I twined my fingers into the hand-holds on either side of me and Pettigrew's right foot came down on the brake. The next moment we had charged over the rim of the *cerro* and were rushing down the smooth slope. The whole expanse of the marsh seemed to be jumping at us, hurling itself upward as though bent on our immediate destruction. I was weighing the probabilities of life and death against each other, when suddenly we spurned the hillside near the foot of the slope and bounded into the air. We were on the wing!

With a gasp I realized that the *Phoenix* had actually gained its native element and that Pettigrew and I were rocking through space like two men in a flying hammock. And then a most remarkable thing happened. All the fears that had clutched at my heart and brain with clammy fingers suddenly released their grip. Exhilaration ran through me like the current of an electric battery, and my nerves tingled clear to my finger-tips. I yelled at the top of my voice—yelled and whooped from a mere excess of joy and rollicking animal spirits.

Steadily rising, we flashed across the low lands and the eddying waters of the Quito. Men, women and children were scurrying like rats through the huts of the town. Panic had taken Quibdo by the throat. Here and there a native had dropped to his knees and was crossing himself.

I had forgotten what Pettigrew had said about being on the safe side and flying low. We must have been about two hundred feet in the air as we circled the bluff and the town.

The *Phoenix* gave a hair-raising roll as we came about. Pettigrew jerked a lever frantically. It must have been the wrong lever, because we ducked downward, aimed ourselves at the mud *casa* of the alcalde and shot toward it with the bit in our teeth.

I was brought out of my foolish extravagance with a round turn. "You'll wreck us, Dan!" I shouted. "Do something—quick!"

For once Pettigrew seemed to have lost his head. He grabbed at lever after lever, as though fishing blindly for the right one. The *Phoenix* reeled and staggered, finally canting upward and just scraping the top of the bamboo flagpole in front of the Don's house.

I looked at Pettigrew as we flickered skyward. His face was pallid under its bronze and he was breathing hard. "A little more," I yelled, "and we'd have been done for! I guess this lesson has lasted long enough, Dan!"

"We're all right now, Jules," he replied. "I pulled the wrong lever when I tried to warp the wing-tips, and after that I got rattled. But I've got the clamps on myself now and we'll get along."

He straightened the machine to a level keel and we flung onward across the Quito and the swamp lands. On the top of the *cerro* we could see Miss Bainbridge, Don Bolivar, Mr. Bainbridge, the *arriero* and Yip Wing, watching us and expressing their delight in various ways. Miss Bainbridge was fluttering a handkerchief, the Don was waving his hat, and Bainbridge, wrapped in a blanket, was hopping around expressively and no doubt to his own physical detriment.

We circled the top of the *cerro* three times, Pettigrew manipulating the wing-tips in masterly fashion. But there was something wrong—a look into Pettigrew's set, bewildered face assured me of that. "Why don't you come down, Dan?" I cried.

"I would, if I knew how!" he answered. "Do you think we're flying circles around the top of the *cerro* for the fun of the thing?"

"I should think," I yelled, "that you'd have figured that out!"

What he said after that I couldn't hear. The screeching of the propellers made a continuous din in our ears. Fate, however, took the landing out of Pettigrew's hands. Something snapped. My heart stood still as I heard the splutter of the dying engine and felt the *Phoenix* dropping under us. One of the palm trees got in front of us, I saw it, and Pettigrew saw it, but there was no earthly way in which we could save ourselves.

The crash was not long in coming. The splintering roar was punctuated by the staccato notes of breaking guys, and I was pushed over backward into a tangle of torn fabric. Then I must have gone to sleep, for I remembered nothing more.

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CHAPTER VII

THE CAPTURED DIRIGIBLE

WHEN I drifted back to the *cerro* out of a sky full of darting aeroplanes I found that I was lying on a blanket under one of the palm trees. Pettigrew was sitting a few feet away, in a canvas chair. A blood-stained bandage was wrapped around his forehead, and his attitude was one of intense melancholy.

"Is the fat in the fire, Dan?" I asked, sitting up.

He jumped from his chair and hurried up to me. "Jules!" he exclaimed, in a spasm of relief. "Are you all right, Jules?"

My sudden move from a horizontal to a sitting posture had brought on a queer dizziness. Everything on the *cerro* was dancing around me in fantastic lines. I was conscious, also, of a throbbing pain at the back of my head. "I'd be all right, I guess," said I, "if the top of the *cerro* would only lie down and keep quiet."

"Here, drink this." A tonic warmth diffused itself through my body, and a pile of stuff, under one of the palm trees, pulled itself together and assumed its normal state of inertia.

"What's that, Dan?" I inquired, pointing.

"That's the *Phoenix*," replied Pettigrew glumly. "Nothing left of it but a pile of junk. How we ever came through the wreck with our lives is a seven-day wonder. When we hit the palm we were about ten feet from the ground. I went over forward and you keeled back into the motor."

"Where's Miss Bainbridge?"

He winced and looked uncomfortable. "Her father got off his cot and came out of the tent to see us fly," said he. "When we hit the tree he collapsed, and now he's delirious, and Miss Bainbridge and the Chinaman are with him."

"Where's the alcalde?"

"Scared out. The *Phoenix* came within one of landing on him. The last I saw of the Don he was making for the Quito and yelling for his guard at every step. The *arriero* is running around picking up his mules. They got scared, too."

The pain in my head had lessened appreciably and my brain was fairly steady. "We've wound up the Yip Wing Development Association," I observed. "The loss of that aeroplane is a knock-out blow. It was a sorry move for Miss Bainbridge when she got us over here with those Ardois signals."

But already my friend's optimism was asserting itself. "I've been thinking about that, Jules," he returned. "Suppose Miss Bainbridge had tried to run the aeroplane? Wasn't it better for us to take the risk than for her to take it? What if she had met with that accident? Probably she wouldn't have come out of the mishap so well as we did."

"And then again, Dan," I speculated, "she might have had more success with the machine. Maybe she would have had sense enough to figure out how to make a landing with it before she took it into the air."

He looked dubiously toward the tent while he was lighting his pipe. From behind the canvas walls came an incoherent mumbling, and then the loud words, "General Jackson! General Jackson!"

"That's Bainbridge," muttered Pettigrew. "The fever's got a strong grip on him. I guess he's fighting the war of 1812."

"We'd better help the expedition back to Buena Ventura," I suggested, "or up the river to Cartagena. Bainbridge will have to be taken out of this pest-ridden country. He and the girl will never lay hands on that pirate gold."

"Inca gold," corrected Pettigrew stubbornly. "I've been thinking about that, too, Jules. With all due regard for Miss Bainbridge's resourcefulness," he added, "I'm bold to affirm that she made a mistake."

"What sort of a mistake, Dan?"

"Well, the carrying capacity of that aeroplane was limited. It was built to carry three, or, say, a weight of five hundred pounds. How much treasure could be transported on such a craft from the five-pointed star to safety outside the zone of Colombian authority? Why, Jules, not enough to pay back the first cost of the expedition!"

"But the *Phoenix* might have made several trips."

"Don't you believe it. Miss Bainbridge was in error, and it's probably a good thing for everybody concerned that the aeroplane was wrecked."

At that moment Miss Bainbridge emerged from the tent and came slowly toward us. Her face bore evidence of the great disappointment she must have felt, but her manner was still marked with firmness and

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determination. Pettigrew placed his chair for her, but she did not sit down. Standing behind it, she stood for a moment gazing searchingly from Pettigrew to me.

"You are neither of you badly hurt?" she asked.

"It seems rather queer," answered Pettigrew, "but the fact remains that neither Jules nor I suffered very seriously. But the aeroplane——"

She cut him short with a gesture. "Never mind the aeroplane," said she. "If either of you had been seriously injured I should never have forgiven myself. It was wrong to let you endanger your lives by trying to manage it. I have thought the whole matter over and have come to the conclusion that the risks are too many. We must give up. It is very hard for me to declare the expedition a failure, but it would be worse than cowardly not to face the facts. My father is very ill, and I feel sure he will never be any better until we get him out of this fever-stricken valley. I have come to ask you if you will help me take him across the Barro Blanco and down the San Juan River to Buena Ventura. There is a boat waiting there to take us to Panama, on the way back to the States."

Her voice and bearing were resolute, nevertheless we could see what an effort it cost her to acknowledge herself beaten.

"IT'S a good idea to get your father away from here," I spoke up, "but you have put a good deal of money into this expedition, and it seems too bad to drop everything when you're so close to that five-pointed star. If you could trust Dan and me to go ahead and try to reach that place on the map, perhaps we could accomplish something. I'm willing to try, anyhow."

"So am I," chimed in Pettigrew. "We could go down the Atrato in a boat, find the star and get whatever there is there."

"You're forgetting about Carlson," she reminded us. "More than likely he has already reached the place."

"We could go there and see, at all events."

"The star is guarded. It would be impossible for you to reach it without some sort of a flying-machine."

Here was news. The cache was guarded! And the aeroplane was to have been used to carry us over the heads of the guards!

"I feel," she went on, "as though I had exposed you gentlemen to enough danger, as it is. We had one chance in a thousand to win. With the aeroplane and a competent aviator our chances were at least even, I was sure; but now the work must be left to Carlson."

"To that traitor!" growled Pettigrew. "I'd go a long way and face a good many dangers to backcap him. I——"

Our attention at this moment was abruptly drawn to the *arriero*. The man was dancing excitedly on the rim of the *cerro*, shouting loudly and waving his hands in the direction of Quibdo.

"What ails the man?" demanded Pettigrew.

"Perhaps the alcalde is paying us another visit," said Miss Bainbridge quietly, "and perhaps he is bringing his soldiers with him."

I got to my feet and started with the girl and Pettigrew toward the *arriero*. When we reached the man's side, a strange spectacle presented itself to our eyes.

A huge, cigar-shaped balloon was poised over the Atrato River some distance below the bluff and the town. Fifty feet below and about the same distance in advance of the airship was a small steamboat. Black smoke was belching out of the steamer's stack and lay low in the still air on the surface of the water. Steadily the steamer was forging toward the bluff, and as steadily the balloon was following.

"Great guns!" shouted Pettigrew. "The gunboat has captured the dirigible! The steamer has picked up the dirigible's drag-rope and has made it fast! She's hauling the balloon to Quibdo! Where are those field-glasses, Jules?" he demanded.

"In the trunk," I answered breathlessly.

"Wait! We'll find out all about this!" and Pettigrew bounded away toward the trunk.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BRITISH CAPTAIN

OUR view of the scene through the glasses brought out its novel details with weird distinctness. The steamboat was a very small David, and the dirigible a very great Goliath; and perhaps the most startling part of the proceeding was the ease with which the pygmy held the giant captive.

"That airship is a hundred and fifty feet long if it's an inch!" declared Pettigrew.

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The car of the airship was suspended at least a dozen feet below the gas-bag. It was of light, open construction, ran the full length of the overhead fabric, and had a propeller jutting out from the middle on either side. We could see motors, two of them, and huge receptacles which must have served as fuel-reservoirs. Between the car and the balloon were the swinging bronze aerials of the wireless apparatus, and forward and aft various supplies and equipment were distributed with the evident purpose of giving the craft its proper trim. Fin-like projections ran along the sides of the cigar-shaped bag, and Pettigrew explained that these were undoubtedly used for height control. The drag-rope, which now served as a cable to make the dirigible fast to the steamer, was secured at its upper end to the center of the *nacelle*, or car.

Three men comprised the crew of the airship. The craft's motors were silent, and to all appearances the three men were yielding under protest to the spectacular performance of the gunboat. Leaning over the side of the car, the men in the dirigible were looking downward and gesticulating angrily. One of them now and again pointed to the Stars and Stripes, floating lazily from halyards that ran from the after end of the *nacelle* to the after end of the pointed gas-bag.

"There's Carlson!" murmured Miss Bainbridge, in a tense voice, transferring the glasses to my comrade. "The man who is pointing to the flag."

Pettigrew studied the fellow for several moments. "He seems to be standing up for his rights as a citizen of the United States," observed Pettigrew dryly. "If he wants to get away, why doesn't he take a hatchet and cut himself adrift?"

As I clapped the glasses to my eyes, the black smoke suddenly rifted and gave me a good view of the after deck of the gunboat. "Four of the gunboat's crew are drawing a bead with rifles on the men in the airship," said I. "That's the reason they're not using a hatchet on the drag-rope, Dan!"

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Pettigrew. "The captain of that dinky little boat has a strangle-hold on the situation, and no mistake! Ah!" he added, "the boat's pulling up to the wharf on the Quito side. We'd better go over there, Jules."

"I wish I could get away," murmured Miss Bainbridge regretfully, "but I can't leave dad. Would it be possible, do you think, to bring Carlson over here so I could have a talk with him?"

"It might," answered Pettigrew, "if we had money enough to bribe the captain of that fussy little teapot. They're all on the make, these fellows, and the oil of palms will grease the conscience of any of 'em."

"An interview with Carlson might not be worth the price," said she.

"Right you are," approved Pettigrew. "So far as I can see, that airship hasn't the treasure, or any part of it, aboard."

Miss Bainbridge flashed a quick, mysterious glance at Pettigrew.

"No," said she, "the treasure isn't aboard the airship."

"Then Carlson hasn't been to the five-pointed star. Maybe," and Pettigrew's face suddenly brightened, "some good will come out of this. If we can't get Carlson over here, Miss Bainbridge, suppose Jules and I talk with him? In case we can get a chance at him, and he's communicative, just what would you like to have us find out?"

"Get him to tell you, if you can," Miss Bainbridge answered, "whether he is working for himself, or for some one else; also, what sort of treasure he——"

Just then a clamor came from the tent. We turned and saw the Chinaman stepping hastily into view. "Missy Hattie!" screeched Yip Wing, tossing his arms wildly. "You makee come chop-chop!"

The girl ran toward the tent, but paused to call back: "Go, and do what you can. I hope we can take dad south in the morning."

She turned and ran on. Pettigrew and I, without delaying further, started down the side of the *cerro*.

"How's your head?" my comrade asked.

"It would feel a lot better," said I, "if I could get the hang of this treasure business."

"She's afraid to tell us how much gold there is at that five-pointed star—afraid the prospect of so much wealth will unbalance us and lure us on when she's determined to turn back with her father to Buena Ventura."

Pettigrew seemed so confident on this point that I did not try to argue him out of his convictions; but I had my doubts, for all that.

There was no boat on our side of the river. We could see the dugout moored to the opposite bank, but all Quibdo had gathered farther down stream, at the place where the

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steamer had tied up with its strange captive. There was no one to bring the dugout over to us.

"Shall we swim?" I suggested dubiously.

"Let's get the Captain of the gunboat to send for us," Pettigrew answered.

The situation aboard the steamer and overhead appeared to be unchanged. The airship still lay supinely in the air, the crew still leaned over the rail of the car, and the sailors below still prevented any tampering with the cable by keeping their rifles lifted. A stout man in a white cap and white duck clothes, his feet planted wide apart, was looking aloft. His hands were thrust in his pockets, and he was apparently pondering a situation that offered some difficulties.

"That big fellow is the Captain," declared Pettigrew, "and he's no native of this country. I'll bet a ten-case note against a last year's bird's-nest, Jules, that he's American."

"American or no," said I, "he acts as though he'd trapped a hornet and was afraid of getting stung."

Pettigrew began to yell and wave his hat and dance around on the bank. I followed suit, and presently one of the steamer's crew called the Captain's attention to us. Carlson likewise caught sight of us. I saw him push along the rail of the car, point us out to one of his companions and then lift his finger in the direction of the *cerro*.

"The plot thickens," chuckled Pettigrew. "Quibdo has had more excitement to-day than it ever had before in fifty years. Look, Jules! The Captain's going to megaphone us."

The Captain had turned so as to face us and was taking a speaking-trumpet from one of his dark-skinned crew.

"What's the bloomin' row?" came the hoarse hail across the Quito.

"He's English, Dan," said I, and somehow my growing hopes took a slump.

"We're Americans," roared Dan, through his hands, "and we want to come across!"

"Louder!" boomed the megaphone.

I added my clamor to Dan's, but without avail; it was only when we made signs that the Captain understood us. We saw him toss the speaking-trumpet aside and move briskly around giving orders. A boat dropped over the steamer's side and started toward us.

The three men were natives. They had nothing whatever to say on the way back to the steamer, but they regarded us with a good deal of curiosity not unmixed with distrust. The Captain himself gave us a hand up the side and we tumbled over the low freeboard to the gunboat's deck.

"Well, strike me lucky!" grunted the Captain. "I thought all the whites in Quibdo were aloft in that blooming airship. The alcalde here says you've been digging gold here for two weeks, that you slanted away for the *cerro* last night or this morning, that there are more Americans on the *cerro*, and that you're all acting suspiciously. What's your lay? If you can help me make anything out of this monkey's fist I wish you'd be at it!"

CHAPTER IX

CARLSON

DON BOLIVAR, it was certain, had said anything but a good word for us. He was merely suspicious, however, and unless he could prove absolutely that we were conspiring against the laws of the Republic of Colombia, I felt sure the Captain would give us the benefit of the doubt.

"Aren't we friends, your Excellency?" asked Pettigrew, facing the alcalde squarely. "Haven't we been peaceable and law-abiding all the time we've been in Quibdo?"

The alcalde shrugged his shoulders. "*Quién sabe?*" said he. "It is not what you and your *compadre* seem to be, señor, but it is what you are. I have my distrust—I have had my distrust for a long time."

Knowing that the alcalde's distrust was assumed because of a lack of tribute, and that it was now being aired solely from a desire to make us trouble, I yearned to lay hands on him and give his little bag of tricks a severe shaking up. But diplomacy suggested that I refrain. Pettigrew, however, began to grow red in the face, and a nasty little glitter, with which I had had previous acquaintance, arose in his eyes.

"See here, Don," he cried, "don't you try to hornswoggle us with the Captain. You know we're honest and law-abiding, that we haven't ruffled the peace of your community, and that we don't seem to be anything more than we are."

"My eye!" said the Captain, appraising us thoroughly and swiftly. "From the looks of you, I'd kiss the Book on it that somebody's peace had been ruffled."

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"*Por supuesto!*" said the Don, cautiously bulwarking himself behind the Captain.

"As for our looks, Captain," went on Pettigrew, touching his bandaged head, "my friend and I have just finished our first lesson in aviating. We smashed our flying-machine and got a few nicks ourselves. That was over on the *cerro*, and the alcalde had a reserved seat for the performance."

"*Es verdad*," piped the alcalde, "he speaks true. But, listen: why that flying-machine and why this?" He waved his hand aloft. "Is it not of a suspicious circumstance that Americanos come among us, at the same time, with such air-boats?"

"What!" roared the Captain, "another of those bally sky-craft afloat in these parts?" He pulled down his thick brows at us. "This is serious, mates," he went on, "blow me tight if it ain't. I'm afraid it don't need any four-inch hawse to take the strain of you filibusters."

"Filibusters?" cried Pettigrew. "Good heavens! We're steam-shovel men from the big ditch."

The Captain stroked his nose with his finger and studied us gloomily. Presently he crooked the finger at the *cerro*. "The woman over there now," said he, "and all the rest of her crowd—are they from the big ditch, too?"

"If we were filibusters," I chimed in, "you don't think for a minute we'd have a lady along?"

The Captain swore under his breath. "I wish on my soul I could get a straight line out of all this raffle!" he growled. "I'm in the pay of the Government at Bogotá, don't forget that; and *please* don't forget that I'd rather a lot invite you into the cabin and crack a bottle for 'hands across the sea' than put irons on you and throw you into the brig. But duty's duty, and Jeremy Jacobs never shirks his trick if he can help it. The Government has grabbed the wireless station on La Popa hill, at Cartagena, and has sent me around from Barranquilla to grab the bag."

Captain Jacobs seemed to forget about us, temporarily.

"That balloon was coming up-river," he went on, "trailing its cable in mid-stream. We steamed under, picked up the cable and made it fast. Since then we've had four Lee-Metfords trained on the airship's crew to keep them from cutting adrift. Now that I've got 'em, by James, what am I going to do with 'em?"

"Make 'em come down," suggested Pettigrew, glad the Captain was ignoring us. "You've got the drop on 'em and it ought to be easy."

"Every time I tell them to come down," scowled the Captain, "they point to the Stars and Stripes and tell me to cut them loose or they'll kick up a row at Washington. If I shoot 'em out of that steel grillwork, mayhap I'll find that I'm in wrong and have to stand for a duffing game."

"We're Americans and they're Americans," observed Pettigrew, inspired by a happy thought, "and if Jules and I were to shoot 'em out of the car then Washington couldn't do a thing to Bogotá."

The big Captain stared, and then an approving grin crossed his whiskered face. "Well, hang me, but that's an idea! Here, you!" and he turned to a couple of the armed men, "turn over your guns to the Americanos. It's Yankees against Yankees, so Yankees must stand the damage."

Pettigrew and I got the guns and drew a bead on the men aloft. It was plain as a pikestaff that our getting into the game was causing the men in the car a good deal of uneasiness and apprehension.

"Come down, you red-headed mucker!" bawled Pettigrew to Carlson; "come down, or we'll throw a little lead into that lattice-work under you!" He was thinking of Miss Bainbridge and of Carlson's treachery, and so was I.

"I'm protected by the flag!" whooped Carlson, once more indicating Old Glory.

"It's our flag, too, you double-faced scoundrel, and it's no protection for a lot of pirates! Come down before we cut loose!"

"Somebody'll smart for this!" roared Carlson.

The next moment a neat rope ladder, light but strong, fell over the rail of the car and swung within two feet of the gunboat's deck. There was no air to speak of, and the big cigar-shaped balloon floated lazily directly overhead. Carlson, very carefully, climbed over the rail and began descending the dancing spiderweb of cords and rungs.

"Come on, the rest of you!" yelled Pettigrew. "We want the whole kit and caboodle."

Carlson halted half-way down. "I can answer all the questions you want to ask," he shouted. "We've got to leave somebody in the car."

"Leave one man," put in Captain Jacobs.

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THE man who had been standing at Carlson's side in the car thereupon said something to the third of the trio and put a leg over the rail. In less than two minutes, both Carlson and his companion were on the gunboat's deck. Pettigrew and I closed in on each side of them.

"This is an outrage!" fumed Carlson.

"Is it?" asked Jacobs. "Well, you're getting your whack from fellow countrymen—don't forget that."

"Who in blazes are you?" demanded Carlson, whirling on Pettigrew.

"The man behind the gun," answered Pettigrew, grimly but vaguely. "You're filibusters, eh?"

"Oh, splash!" came the disgusted retort. "We're hunting orchids—odontoglossums."

"There must be money in odontoglossums," laughed Pettigrew, "when you go hunting them with a fifty-thousand-dollar airship. And you put up that wireless station on La Popa, I suppose, in order to let the breathless world keep track of your progress. Oh, shucks!"

A look passed between Pettigrew and Carlson, then Carlson's eyes switched to the *cerro* and withdrew to fix themselves upon the Captain.

Carlson was a small man with fiery eyes and a temper. I could see that. Like his companion from the car, he was clad in khaki. "I want a word with you, Jorkins," remarked Carlson, to the man at his side.

Both men made as though they would step away, but Pettigrew ordered them to halt. "Don't get off to one side and put up something," said Pettigrew. "We'll not stand for that."

Carlson was restraining himself with evident effort. He whirled on the Englishman. "Who's captain of this boat?" he asked.

"I am," answered Jacobs.

"Then I'll talk with you. This other man"—he nodded to Pettigrew—"I don't know and don't want to know. I'm in this country on a peaceable errand. You think I'm a gun-runner. Take me some place where we can talk and I'll convince you to the contrary."

Pettigrew, I could see, didn't want the Captain and Carlson to get their heads together. "He's barking up the wrong tree, Jacobs," he laughed. "He wants to hand over something valuable, so you'll wink at your duty."

If there was a pie to be cut, the alcalde wanted some of it. "Señor," said he, "I am the alcalde. We will both go apart with the Captain and have our talk, eh?"

"What we say we'll say in the open," rumbled Jacobs. "Look here, you," and he faced Carlson squarely. "An ordinary ship carries papers. Let's see yours."

"They're in the car," answered Carlson. "I'll go up and get them, and——"

"You stay here," interrupted Jacobs, scenting a treacherous move. "You go," he added, turning to Pettigrew, "and when you're up there, look around for contraband of war."

Another idea was working stealthily in Pettigrew's mind. His face reflected it dimly. "Jules," and he turned to me, "suppose you go for the papers? It's all right to send my friend, Captain?" he added to Jacobs, with a great show of respect.

"It's all one to me who goes," said the Captain, "just so he gets the papers."

I was going to lay aside the gun preparatory to attempting the rope ladder. "Better take it with you," suggested Pettigrew. "The man in the car may show fight."

"No," interposed the Captain, "stick this in your pocket. It will do as well as the rifle and will bother you less."

He handed me a short-barreled, ugly-looking bulldog revolver which he pulled from somewhere under his duck coat. I was thrilled with the idea that Pettigrew's wits were working, and I was curious to see what they would do for us. I did not look below as I climbed, but kept my gaze steadily on the swaying car.

The man in the car glared at me as I rolled over the rail. The car was cluttered with stay-rods, guy-wires, reservoirs and machinery, but I had no time for a discriminating examination of my surroundings.

"What do you want?"

"Ship's papers," said I.

"Buncombe!" he retorted. "A ship like this doesn't have papers."

"Carlson must have made a mistake, then. He said——"

But what Carlson had said I had no chance to repeat. At that instant I felt a flutter of the car's framework. A startled look over the side showed the heights of Quibdo floating southward!

Struck with something like panic, I looked downward. We were north of the gunboat. I had a glimpse of Captain Jacobs storming around the deck, and of the alcalde

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flinging his arms around him in consternation, and of the steamer's crew standing like wooden men and staring. A yell came from below. The cable was dragging in the water, and Pettigrew was clinging to the cable! Then my heart jumped into my throat. The airship had broken away from the gunboat, and Pettigrew had either grabbed the cable, or had become entangled in it!

Before I could carry my observations farther, two arms went around me from behind and I was jerked violently backward to the bottom of the car.

CHAPTER X

PETTIGREW'S PLOT

THE attack upon me, of course, had been made by the other man in the car, although why he should have had recourse to violence, at a time when we were both victims of a serious mischance, was something I failed to understand.

In pulling me backward, we both fell, landing at full length in a part of the narrow car which was fairly clear of machinery and other equipment. My assailant was underneath, and the weight of my body knocked the breath out of him and left him dazed for a moment. That moment spelled opportunity for me. As his muscular arms relaxed, I twisted around and wrenched the revolver from my hip-pocket. There was too much open-work about that car to give me any stomach for a rough and tumble. Through any one of a dozen gaps the two of us could have fallen, and plunged through space and into the river.

"That'll do," said I, showing him the bulldog. "You must be crazy to do a thing like that when an accident has cast us both adrift. Carlson and Jorkins are back there on the gunboat, and you certainly don't want to abandon them."

"Let me up!" he answered, between his teeth.

"Yes, Jules," put in a voice from the rail, "let him up."

"Dan!" I cried, for it was none other than Pettigrew, breast-high above the rail and about to climb into the car. "You didn't climb that thick rope, did you?"

He got over the rail and leaned against it, dripping wet from the waist down. "I got up by the ladder," he returned, chuckling. "When you fellows dropped, the car wobbled like a boat in a heavy sea. The end of the ladder was thrown against the cable, and I caught the bottom rung. What do you think of that play, Jules?"

"I think you got out of a bad mess by the skin of your teeth, Dan. We're drifting northward. Suppose we start up the machinery and work our way back to the gunboat."

Pettigrew stared at me as I regained my feet and gripped one of the guy-wires to steady myself. The man in the gray shirt was sitting up, nursing the back of his head where it had come in contact with a steel rib of the car's framework.

"What's the matter with you?" I flung at Dan fretfully.

He pursed up his lips and whistled. "You don't mean to say you thought that was an accident?" he demanded. "Didn't you know there'd be something doing when I delegated you to come up here after the papers so I could stay below?"

I had the revolver in my right hand and lifted it to rub my forehead with the back of my wrist. Pettigrew had contrived a plot and had carried it through successfully, but to what end?

"When Carlson and Jorkins left the airship," went on Pettigrew, "they lightened it by about two hundred and seventy-five pounds. The airship tugged at the cable, lifting the coil to the top of the bitt. When you climbed the rope-ladder, the cable slackened, but the coil was almost free. I backed against the bitt. Away went the cable, trailing after the airship. I grabbed it. It looked like a plain accident to Jacobs and the rest on the gunboat—an accident, with Uncle Dan playing the fool and trying to hold the dirigible with his bare hands. If they hadn't thought it an accident, Jules, they'd have used their guns."

"We're in a fine row of stumps now!" I muttered.

"Jules," averred Pettigrew, "we're better off than you think. Jacobs would have detained us on the gunboat, after he'd had a little time to attend to our case, and now we've found it convenient to let him detain Carlson and Jorkins in our stead. We smashed the aeroplane for Miss Bainbridge, and we'll proceed to make up for that by letting her have the use of this steerable balloon."

"Dan," said I fervently, "you're a wonder!"

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Pettigrew grinned and turned to the man in the gray shirt. "What's your name?"

"Trent," was the reply.

"What's your duty aboard here?"

"General utility—wireless operator, machinist, anything and everything. I saw you pull off that little game on the gunboat."

"Good eye! When you discovered what was going on, you tried to down Jules, there, and make yourself the boss sky-pirate. Is that the way of it?"

"The *Hawk* was in trouble, and I wanted to save her."

"*Hawk?*"

"That's the name of this airship."

"Do you know what the *Hawk's* business is in this little out-of-the-way corner of South America, Trent?"

The high-class roustabout spat reflectively at a pair of caymans drowsing on a sandbar. "Well, no, not exactly," said he.

"Maybe I can tell you something about it," grinned Pettigrew, "but before we indulge in any extended conversation I wish you would give me your opinion as to whether or not the *Hawk* will be all right if we let her drift."

We were floating slowly down the valley of the Atrato, strangely, as it seemed to me, keeping to the crooks and turns and hovering over the river's main channel. The tropical forest massed itself into a wall on each side of the sluggish water, and *lianas*, or monkey-ladders, swung from tree to tree, some of them loaded with richly colored orchids. A monkey, balanced on a high branch, made faces at us as we floated past.

"There's not a capful of air stirring," said Trent. "What little there is seems to be set in motion by the river."

"I don't want to bump into the Andes," observed Pettigrew.

"We're more liable to bump into the *Hondo*—which is what that beef-eater calls his dinky little gunboat."

"If the *Hondo* chases us," returned Pettigrew, with an anxious look up-stream, "we can switch on the power, can't we, and run out over the jungle?"

"We can. If Carlson had taken my advice he'd have done that when the *Hondo* came nosing under us and tailed on to our cable."

"Keep a sharp look behind, Jules," said Pettigrew. "The instant you raise the *Hondo's* smoke, speak up. Now, Trent," and he faced the other man again, "you and I might as well begin to understand each other. Carlson and Jorkins are in the hands of Captain Jacobs, of the *Hondo*, and they'll stay there—for some sort of a while anyhow. Jules and I would also have stayed there if I hadn't contrived this brilliant getaway. We three are the sole survivors, and we have the free and untrammeled use of the *Hawk*. This spells opportunity with a big 'O.' Had you thought of that, Trent?"

Trent sat down on the railing, hooked his elbows around a couple of stay-rods and kicked absently with his rubber-soled feet.

"I don't know what right you fellows have to butt in," was his final deduction.

"No?" said Pettigrew. "Well, suppose we consider. First, there is the right of two to one. If we want it so, Jules and I will have complete and undisputed possession of the *Hawk* and you'll be less than a figurehead. We're straight, and we're inclined to think that you're straight, too, although you were caught in tricky company."

"You haven't anything on me, even at that."

"Here's what we've got on you, Trent," proceeded Pettigrew. "Have you heard of Miss Bainbridge?"

There was no oral response from Trent; just a quick lifting of the eyes.

"OF COURSE," nodded Pettigrew, "it was a low-down proceeding of Carlson's when he slanted away with all the details of this treasure-hunt that rightfully belong to the Bainbridge expedition. I'm not consumed with regrets because we've annexed Carlson's balloon. For the matter of that, we're paying a treacherous hound right back in his own coin. We represent the Yip Wing Development Association. Now, cutting this off short and getting right down to cases, do you want to cast in your lot with ours, or will you play the part of an innocent bystander, with no share in the loot?"

"What sort of loot do you think it is?" inquired Trent curiously.

"Inca gold," said Pettigrew positively.

I whirled around from watching up-river to drop in a few words of my own, but Pettigrew waved me to silence.

"How do you account for Inca gold being where you suppose it is?" asked Trent.

"I have my theories," answered Pettigrew. "It's a matter of history, Trent, that pirates and buccaneers made the Pacific

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so unhealthy for the early treasure-trove Spaniards that they lugged their ingots of gold and silver overland from as far south as Potosi and Pilcomayo. These treasure caravans reached Cartagena by the Magdalena River, or by the Atrato. There came a time when Cartagena itself was sacked. It comes to me, Trent, that a train of gold-carriers from the south, hearing of the sacking of Cartagena on their way up the Atrato, hid the loot they were carrying. And this loot, I feel sure, we shall find at the star on that Chinese map."

This was a brand new theory of Pettigrew's. But it was weak in spots, and my own theory about the treasure's having a piratical origin was not shaken.

"To be honest with you," said Trent, "I was told mighty little about what we were going to find. I know where Carlson got his map, and how he got it. Maybe he was wrong and maybe he wasn't. Any one with two-bits could make Yip Wing show his back. We won't consider that point now. I was told by Carlson that we had one chance in a thousand of landing a good thing and that if we won out I'd be fixed for life. Excitement is food and drink for me, and always has been, so I joined Carlson and Jorkins." He paused. "I can't for the life of me see," he finished at last, "why I shouldn't look out for Number One and go with you and your friends on the same terms. What can you offer me if I stick?"

"Two shares in the Yip Wing Development Association," said Pettigrew. "Jules and I are to have six. It's an even divvy."

"What's the probable extent of the gross winnings?"

"Oh, don't ask me. Probably up in the millions."

If excitement was really food and drink for Trent, he had a full meal right there. "After all," he remarked, his face falling, "it's only one chance in a thousand."

"It's a whole lot better than that now, fixed as we are," asserted Pettigrew.

"Well," said Trent, "count me in, to share and share alike. What am I to do?"

"Show us how to run the *Hawk*. That's the principal thing, but, as we seem to be drifting comfortably, it can wait. The big menace to our success will come from Bogotá, and Bogotá will be kept in touch with the situation from Cartagena. What news Cartagena gets will probably come from the Colon navy-yard through the wireless station on La Popa. First off, Trent, pretend to be Colon and ask La Popa for news of the gun-runners."

Trent left the rail and went a little forward of the middle of the car, dodging the various odds and ends that got in his way. For a few moments he busied himself with the electrical equipment, then he clamped a little cage on his head, unfolded a canvas chair and placed himself in front of his sending machinery. There was a hissing, crackling, and sputtering. Blue sparks dripped off the ends of the aerials. Drifting slowly down-stream, midway between earth and heaven, there was something nerve-wracking about that wireless performance of Trent's. Bellbirds, flutebirds, and macaws, frightened by the noise, took to wing and screamed away into safer depths of the forest.

Trent, after a while, stopped working his lever and bent over the responder, pushing his ear-phones tight to his head.

"Nothing doing," he said, after a time. "No one on duty at La Popa or——"

The words died on his lips. Hunching himself together at strained attention, he listened intently. Finally he turned, freed his ears of the contrivance that clogged his hearing, and said: "'H. B.' is what I get. Who's that?"

"Holy smoke!" yelled Pettigrew, starting forward. "'H. B.' is 'Hattie Bainbridge.' For the love of James, we've picked up the *cerro!* I'd forgotten all about that palm-tree station. We'll talk with Miss Bainbridge and explain what we're up to. We'll——"

"Be quick about it, then!" I called. "The *Hondo* is right behind us and coming down-stream with a bone in her teeth!"

CHAPTER XI

WIRELESS UNDER DIFFICULTIES

PETTIGREW jumped to the right-about and took a look at the *Hondo* for himself. There she was, vomiting vapor from her stacks and churning after us, full tilt. We could not distinguish officers or crew, or form any idea of their intentions, friendly or hostile.

Trent was rubbing his hands delightedly, on his face a look of pleasant anticipation.

"Confound you," yelled Pettigrew, "what are you grinning about? Are you hoping we'll get nabbed?"

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"It's the excitement," explained Trent. "Trouble's the sauce of life, and I like existence best when it's served up well garnished."

"You've got to do two things, Trent," grunted Pettigrew; "start the propellers and move the *Hawk* out over the jungle, and talk by wireless with Miss Bainbridge."

"Both at once?"

"Don't be a muttonhead! If we hover above the Atrato while using the wireless, the *Hondo* will get us; and if we don't talk with that *cerro* without delay, we may get out of tune, or something, with that palm-tree station. Certainly we've got to do both at once!"

"Well," answered Trent, "we can't."

"Why not? Jules and I will look after the propellers and steer while you're firing dots and dashes through the ether."

"It's this way," said Trent; "if we use the wireless, we'll have to run the motor for the dynamo and get the juice into the accumulators. While we're doing that, the propellers will have to remain idle. Our extra motor is out of commission."

The car lurched heavily as Pettigrew hurled himself at Trent and grabbed him by the throat. "Before I strangle you," he gritted, "tell me whether that talk's a fair shake or a false alarm! Man, man, we're down to brass tacks, and if you are trying to do us dirt, we want to know it *now!*"

"Aw, piffle!" gurgled Trent. His disgust at Pettigrew's suspicion and violence was so genuine that Pettigrew let go.

"What do I care who heads this fool expedition," snapped Trent, "so long as there's plenty doing? Which move shall we make—start the propellers and get clear of the river, or talk with 'H. B'?"

Pettigrew tossed a look astern at the *Hondo*, coming rapidly into clearer prominence, and he debated for perhaps thirty seconds. "Talk with the *cerro*," said he.

"Suppose La Popa hears it?"

"Hang La Popa! You couldn't get that outfit a while ago, and the chances are there's no one there now. Watch the *Hondo*, Jules," he said to me, and followed Trent to the wireless outfit.

It was easy enough to watch the *Hondo*, but if that talk with Miss Bainbridge lasted too long it was a clear case of our drag-rope getting tangled up with the troublesome gunboat. I saw that the upper end of the cable was fast to a winch, and that the winch could be handled with a lever.

"Hadn't I better haul in the cable until it's out of reach of the *Hondo?*" I shouted.

"Hands off that cable!" Trent called back. "There's a steel rope twisted in it, and it gives us our 'ground.' If you haul it clear of the water we can't use the wireless."

I made up my mind that there were a lot of things I didn't know about this twentieth-century way of going after eighteenth-century treasure, so I hung over the rail and watched the gunboat. I could hear Pettigrew instructing Trent.

"Tell Miss Bainbridge it's Carlson's dirigible, the *Hawk*, Pettigrew in command and talking. Tell her there were three in the *Hawk*, Carlson, Jorkins and Trent; that Carlson and Jorkins are now prisoners on the gunboat, that Leffingwell is with me, and that Trent has cast in his lot with us. Add to that that we'll go to the cross and get the loot, and that she needn't worry."

All this took time, and the blue sparks crackled off into space with a display and clamor that suggested the glorious Fourth. Then followed a time during which Trent was receiving. "She says," Trent's voice finally came to me from forward, "that she saw what happened through the glasses, and that she's afraid you haven't information enough to go on successfully."

"Have you got Carlson's map and papers?" demanded Pettigrew.

"They're handily by," answered Trent.

"Then tell Miss Bainbridge that we've got all of Carlson's information and that we're out for a killing. Also tell her that the alcalde is getting disagreeable, that when the Captain of the gunboat fails to catch us and puts back to Quibdo he'll be just as disagreeable as the alcalde, and that she had better start for Buena Ventura with the *arriero* and Yip Wing, toting her father in a blanket swung between two of the mules. Tell her to get on the boat and make a record run for Panama, and that we'll get what we're after and meet her there or in Colon. As to honesty, integrity, and all that, we refer her to the boss in charge of the big ditch. Hustle it off, Trent; you can't send the message faster than she can take it."

Trent must have hustled, but he couldn't have been half done with the message before the *Hondo* had nosed her way uncomfortably close. I could see the Captain on his little bridge, megaphone under his arm. At his left stood a couple of dusky officers, and

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at his right was the alcalde. Below was a barefooted group with rifles. As I watched, Jacobs lifted the trumpet to his lips and I braced myself for what was to come.

"Heave to or we'll rip that gas-bag to ribbons!" That order indicated suspicion and active hostility.

"Don't rush things, Jacobs!" I yelled through my hands. "One of the motors is disabled. Stand clear till we're ready and we'll race you back to Quibdo."

I could see Jacobs holding a brief but animated conversation with his officers and the Don. Meanwhile the *Hondo* was perilously close to the drag-rope.

"She says all right and good luck," I heard Trent say to Pettigrew, "and that she'll never forget."

"Tell her," began Pettigrew, "that——"

"That'll do!" I called. "The *Hondo's* almost under us!"

"Start the propellers," said Pettigrew, as cool as you please, and Trent laughed from sheer happiness as he jumped to obey orders.

Trent seemed imbued with the idea that life was most enjoyable when it stepped out of its way to rub elbows with death.

The propellers on either side of the car began to thrash the air. The first low hum merged steadily into a shrieking crescendo. I stole a look behind and saw that Pettigrew was at the motor while Trent was forward, steering. A vertical plane, three feet away from me and a foot below, turned itself to the left. The *Hawk* answered the rudder and the huge bulk of the balloon also began to turn.

Almost directly underneath us, the *Hondo's* stern wheel was backing water. I saw the drag-rope incline across the gunboat's deck, then begin wriggling its dripping end aboard and over the bridge. The two officers dodged it, but the Captain and the Don were floored. The officers, keeping their wits, yelled something in Spanish to the gaping crew. Another moment and the slippery end of the cable was grabbed by a dozen pairs of hands and coiled around the bitt in a half hitch.

The *Hawk*, moving off to the end of her tether, came to a halt with a jar. We were snared, but only for a moment. Pettigrew came stumbling back to the winch, an ax in his hands. He began to chop. The hemp offered little resistance, but the steel rope twisted into it defied the edge of the ax. Using the other side of the ax he smashed the winch, and presently a hundred feet of cable slammed down on the *Hondo's* deck and caused still further demoralization.

Instantly the *Hawk* began to mount. *Plunk* came a stacatto note from the narrow steel toe-path under our feet. "They're shooting!" I yelled.

"What do we care," roared Pettigrew, "just so they don't get any lead into us or into the balloon?"

And still we went up and still the propellers shrieked as they drove us onward. The river receded and the massed tree-tops were under us. Trent slid and staggered rearward, his bronzed face glowing and his hand outstretched. "Shake, Pettigrew!" he bellowed. "Wireless communication has been permanently interrupted by the loss of the drag-rope, but that little go was worth the price!"

CHAPTER XII

CARLSON'S PAPERS

LIGHTENED by the loss of the heavy drag-rope, the dirigible mounted high into space. The sun went down and we settled until the dusky tree-tops were no more than a dozen feet below us. Trent ran out a spare drag-rope, useless as a "ground," but helping to keep the airship at a certain height after the ship had been properly trimmed. If the sun expanded the gas, and the *Hawk* began to rise, more and more of the rope was lifted from the ground, thus throwing added weight on the *nacelle* and offsetting the force of the lift. If the gas contracted, and the airship settled, more of the rope's weight dropped and lay on the ground.

We tied up for the night; and this tying-up, successfully managed by Trent, was a hair-raising performance. He descended the rope ladder until fifteen or twenty feet below the car, then gave the ladder a swaying motion which enabled him, at the proper moment, to reach out and grasp the drag-rope. With the rope imprisoned within the crook of his arm, he descended still farther and made it fast to the stout limb of a huge *candelero*. After his return to the car the propellers were stopped and the *Hawk* drifted northward to the end of her tether and lay moored.

A couple of electric lights were turned on, coffee was made on an electric stove, bacon

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was fried and a can of ship's biscuit was opened. It was my first mid-air meal, and after the trying ordeals of that eventful day I must say I enjoyed it. The only fly in the ointment was the cutting out of our usual postprandial smoke. Fire was taboo on the *Hawk* because of the gasoline.

"What we do," remarked Trent, "we'll have to do quick. The whole country will be stirred up against us. It isn't much of a country so far as inhabitants go, but there's now and then a *champan* on the river, and now and then a huddle of huts filled with Indians, *mestizos* and niggers. News travels slow, but we'd best not count on that. If we reach that cross on the map, comrades, we'll have to be about it!"

"We can't do anything at night," I put in.

"Quite so," agreed Trent, "but we'd better arrange our campaign so as to start it off bright and early in the morning."

Pettigrew roused out of his reflections. "I hope that outfit on the *cerro* gets away without having any trouble with the alcalde or Jacobs," he remarked. "However, we have our work cut out for us, and we can do more for Miss Bainbridge by carrying it through successfully than by trying to help her get to Buena Ventura. Get the papers, Trent, and we'll see what we're up against."

Trent went forward and presently returned with a small metal box fastened with a hasp and a Yale lock. "The documents are all in here," said he. "Carlson and Jorkins spent a good deal of time over the stuff in that box. You know your rights better than I do, Pettigrew. If you want to break the lock, heave ahead."

Pettigrew took the box on his knees. "No need to break the lock," he answered. "The box is tin, and a can-opener will do the trick." He fished in his pockets for a knife. "What was Jorkins' part in the expedition, Trent?"

"He furnished most of the money. He's a Baltimore man. He's outfitted more divers and explored more wrecks than any man you ever heard of. That's his hobby, hunting for treasure. His father was in the oyster business and left several millions. Ever since he came into that big fortune, Jorkins has been throwing good money after bad."

"Some men," grunted Pettigrew, "are long on cash and short on sense." With his knife he cut a hole in the box, thrust in his hand and drew out a packet of folded papers. The packet was encircled with two rubber bands. I was interested and excited. Here, if anywhere, we were to secure the details so vital to our quest.

Pettigrew pulled out the first paper. It was a legal-looking document and proved to be a contract between Carlson and Jorkins with a New Jersey dealer in orchids. Different sorts of epiphytes were specified, and fancy prices offered for any new varieties.

"Thunder!" grunted Pettigrew, throwing the paper aside after reading it aloud. "Looks as if Carlson meant what he said when he told Jacobs he was after odontoglossums."

I was thunderstruck. Was there a mistake somewhere? Had Pettigrew and I made off with the equipment belonging to a lot of innocent orchid hunters? Simmering the matter down still more, was the "treasure" Miss Bainbridge was after merely a new kind of air-plant? I went sick all over at the mere thought.

Through that whole packet Pettigrew carried his search for something worth while. All he found was more contracts with orchid dealers in various parts of the country and in England.

Trent, during this disappointing search, had sat calmly by. "Don't fret, Pettigrew," said he, when the last paper in the packet had been examined. "Take it from me, those papers are all a bluff. Carlson and Jorkins wouldn't study over them as I've seen them doing, if contracts with orchid-dealers were the only papers in the box. Look for a false bottom. Ten to one the papers would be concealed."

Imbued with hope, Pettigrew measured the depth of the box, outside and in, with his open pocket-knife. There was an inch difference in the measurements! Another hole was made and another packet was developed.

First there was a map, easily deciphered as a map of that particular region. This was a printed chart. Next there was a diagram, a perfect replica of the tattooed map Yip Wing carried on his back. Finally there were several sheets of pencilled memoranda. In substance, the memoranda gave us the following information:

The Purgatoire enters the Atrato from the east fifteen miles above Quibdo. Follow the Purgatoire toward the Cordillera. Turn from the Purgatoire at the point where two peaks are to be seen north by east. Pass

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between the peaks and enter the basin. Enter the hut by the giant ceiba.

These various memoranda were preceded by the notation:

What follows was secured from the Chinaman. Difficult work, for H. B. kept the Chinaman almost constantly under her eyes. Five hundred thousand to be paid by the International Junta for the iron box and its guardian. Query: Who and what is this International Junta? The iron box, of course, contains the treasure. But who is the guardian? Note: this last information overheard as it passed between H. B. and her father. Could not amplify information. All Chink could or would add was his chattering "One chance in a thousand."

On the printed chart were traced, in red, the lines tattooed on Yip Wing's back. They followed the course of the Atrato and turned into the Purgatoire, then left the Purgatoire presumably for the two peaks and the basin.

"We don't know any more about the treasure than we did before," I grunted.

"If it's all in one little iron box," said Pettigrew heavily, "there's not gold enough to pay for the risk."

"It's the five hundred thousand to be turned over by this International Junta, I take it," put in Trent, "that makes the game worth the candle. We can't be far from the Purgatoire. Suppose we turn in and begin hunting for it in the morning?"

"Good advice!" approved Pettigrew, and we took to three swinging hammocks, vastly puzzled and none too sanguine.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GUARDED HUT

IF THE memoranda jotted down in Carlson's papers were to be relied on, then what we were looking for was neither Inca gold nor pirate treasure. This momentous fact weighed heavily on my mind as I went to sleep, and it was still with me when I opened my eyes in the morning, stared up at the bulging fabric of the balloon and listened to the screech and chatter of forest life from below.

"Turn out, Jules," came the voice of Pettigrew; "you don't want to sleep your head off when we've got so much to do. Ho, for that cross on the map, pard!"

"And ho, for the double-cross for the rest of us," I answered glumly, turning the hammock upside down and dropping to the steel toe-path.

For the greater part of its course the Atrato flowed through a swamp, most of it densely forested. Dank, malarial odors floated up to me, but mingling with them, from nearer at hand, was the smell of boiling coffee and the aroma of frying bacon.

"Aeroplanes aren't in it with these dirigibles," remarked Pettigrew, leaning against the rail beside me. "I'll bet a calabash of nuggets against a Summer breeze, Jules, that I can run this airship as well as Trent himself."

"We've had easy sailing up to now," said I. "Don't throw any bouquets at the *Hawk* until we see what she does in a wind. And talking of gold, I wonder what's going to happen to our partnership calabash and the yellow metal we stuffed it with?"

"Miss Bainbridge will take care of that," Pettigrew returned with airy confidence.

"Cut out the generalities, Dan," I went on, "and let's specialize. For the sake of argument, let's suppose we get what we're going after, up the Atrato. How'll we get out of the country?"

"Airship," said he.

"Clear to New York, eh?" I jeered. "Don't you think it! As a means of transportation a dirigible balloon is a long way from being dependable."

"The trip has been such a success, so far, that I don't see why we can't bank on getting to Colon in the *Hawk*."

"Tush! The wind's likely to land us on a peak of the Andes, or hang us up over the Pacific. There's still air in the valley of the Atrato, but when we try to leave the valley we're sure going to start something."

"I'm not going to argue over something we know nothing about, Jules. We'll just use the airship as long as we can and trust to luck."

Trent announced breakfast, just then, and over the meal we debated our position relative to the Purgatoire. Pettigrew and I had come up the river in the motor launch. We had passed the mouths of many rivers entering the Atrato from east and west, but we hadn't learned the rivers by names. Trent came to the rescue. He remembered, while the *Hawk* was being towed up-stream by the gunboat, that Carlson and Jorkins had studied the mouth of a certain tributary and had declared that it was the Purgatoire.

"There are two sandbars at the mouth of it," he declared, "and a wrecked *bongo* on one of them. We'll go cruising for the sandbars."

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Following breakfast, Trent filled the fuel-tanks from a gasoline reservoir, and then went down the rope-ladder to cast off the drag-rope. The drift of the *Hawk* carried him through a couple of tree-tops, and he was more or less bruised and scratched, but he succeeded in getting back safely.

"What are a few nicks if there's plenty doing?" he inquired cheerfully. "Keep a sharp watch for the gunboat. I'm hoping we're done with Jacobs, but you never can tell how long an Englishman will hang on."

He started the motor and the propellers began to scream and to gather power. Leaving the motor to itself, he took his place at the steering-wheel. On the way to the river our drag-rope wriggled and crashed through the jungle. I expected every moment to see it foul, but it disappointed me most agreeably.

Pettigrew and I became aware, suddenly, that we were rising higher and higher. We stumbled forward to ask Trent about it.

"It's the sun," Trent informed us. "The gas is expanding. There, listen to that."

Bang! went something overhead.

"What's that?" cried Pettigrew.

"The heated gas tightening a fold in the envelope," replied Trent. "We've got to let out some of the hydrogen. I hate to do it, but we're too buoyant for the weight we carry. Take the wheel, Pettigrew."

While Pettigrew steered, Trent manipulated a cord that ran up into the middle of the big bag's under side. While he held the cord, a hiss as of escaping steam came to our ears above the clamor of the thrashing screws. We began to drop, and when we had settled low enough Trent released the cord.

By then we were over the river. Before Trent could take the wheel again, Pettigrew engineered a turn down-stream that almost stood the gas-bag on end. Had the three of us not hung on for dear life we should have been spilled into space.

By the time we had resumed a horizontal position Pettigrew had no doubt reached the conclusion that he still had a whole lot to learn about dirigibles. He gave up the wheel to Trent without any urging, came back to where I was standing and we went on watch for the *Hondo*.

The gunboat was not in evidence, and when we had glided a mile down the river a triumphant yell from Trent drew our attention. He was pointing downward, and to the right. Leaning out over the rail, Pettigrew and I craned our necks and stared in the direction Trent was indicating. We saw the mouth of a river and two sandbars, and on one of the bars was a native dugout, stove in and abandoned.

"The Purgatoire!" cried Pettigrew.

"Perhaps," I answered. "Carlson and Jorkins may not have known what they were talking about."

Trent trailed our drag-rope into the Purgatoire, and then for two solid hours we hustled up that tropical stream. The rugged foothills of the sierra jumped toward us with astonishing leaps, and the Purgatoire, now and again, poured its waters over steps that raised its altitude by hundreds of feet.

Pettigrew and I, on the north side of the car, were looking for the two peaks. We picked up one, and as the *Hawk* flew steadily east, a second peak came out from behind the first. "There they are, Trent!" roared Pettigrew. "Carlson and Jorkins were right about this river being the Purgatoire."

Trent nodded. Throwing the wheel over, spoke by spoke, he altered the *Hawk's* course and we bore away for the peaks. We crossed a country that was mostly up and down, gashed with black chasms and bristling with crags. To get to those peaks by land from the Purgatoire would have taxed the powers of a mountain goat. How men could ever cross those chasms and climb those cliffs was a matter of incredulous speculation. Our drag-rope slid into bottomless pits and brought us down until the car almost brushed the rocks; then, when the rope doubled over a cliff and laid its weight on the brink, we shot upward with a sort of buck-jump very trying to the nerves.

However, the two peaks came closer. Trent had pointed the dirigible to pass between them, but a sudden rush of air blew us back and turned us broadside-on. It was so unexpected, that rush of air, that Pettigrew and I stared at each other in amazement.

"We're getting clear of the valley," explained Trent, "and we're up where the air's stirring. I doubt if we can beat our way in."

UNDER his direction the motor was speeded up until the propellers whirled so fast they looked like a vague, circular blur. Slowly we came around, heeling to the wind, and pointed once more for the gap between the peaks.

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Although we fought that wind with every ounce of our power, yet the bulky bag offered a resistance we could not overcome. Foot by foot we were forced around until the strong breeze caught the full length of the bag. As the breeze bore us west the propellers carried us south, and presently we were under the wall of a ridge that extended south from the nearest peak.

"No use!" shouted Trent, slowing down the propellers until, now that we were sheltered from the wind, they held us stationary. "We'll have to tie up and go through that place on foot."

Pettigrew, finding the *Hawk* baffled, was fast losing his faith in dirigibles. He and I both agreed with Trent that it would be best to tie up. A huge *palo de vaca* offered advantages for mooring, and Trent once more performed his hair-raising stunt of dropping down the rope ladder and getting the drag-rope fast to one of the branches.

Over the ridge should be the basin, and in the basin should be the ceiba and the hut. That hut was our objective point, for it—supposedly—sheltered the strong box and its guardian. It was agreed between us that Trent should remain with the *Hawk* and that Pettigrew and I should reconnoiter the basin. It was also agreed that we should have dinner before we started.

As soon as the meal was out of the way, Trent opened a locker and took from it a couple of Winchester rifles and two belts fluted around with cartridges.

"You'd better go heeled," said he, "for there's no telling what you'll run into over that ridge. I'd like to go along,"—and there was wistfulness in his voice as he spoke—"but we're going to need the *Hawk* and some one will have to look after her. If there's more in the basin than you think you can shoulder, come back. The wind may change, or go down with the sun, and perhaps we could force our way through between the peaks. Don't try anything rash if it seems better to play a waiting game."

As the rope ladder hung it was about twenty feet from the bottom rung to the ground beneath; but ten feet to the left of the ladder's foot was a rock projecting from the side of the slope. Pettigrew, his rifle swung over his shoulder by a strap, was first to descend. When he reached the bottom rung he gave the ladder a swinging motion which enabled him to drop from it on to the rocky ledge.

The *Hawk* responded at once to the loss of his hundred and sixty pounds, but not enough to change the ladder's position appreciably. As an afterthought, and just as I was about to make my own essay over the rail, Trent threw the strap-loop of a case containing field-glasses over my shoulder.

I shivered a little as I started down the ladder, but the feeling that I was getting closer to solid ground with every foot of my descent reassured me. The crux of the undertaking came when I had to make myself the ball of the pendulum and swing to the ledge. Pettigrew reached out and helped me, and I scrambled to his side.

"Good luck," called Trent, over the rail of the car, as we began climbing the slope.

A hundred feet up and we were on a level with the *Hawk*. Another hundred feet and we were at the top of the ridge and looking down on the elongated sphere of varnished silk. The crest was bare of everything but boulders, and almost flat. Fifty feet carried us to the brink of the opposite slope, and there we paused to get in touch with the topography of the country before us.

The ridge, we found, described an irregular circle. The only break in the circle was the gap between the peaks. We guessed that the basin's diameter was close to half a mile. Its bottom was a treeless and shrubless *estero*, or grazing-land, covered with Para and Guinea grass waist high. There was a dark blot in the center, and I unlimbered the field-glasses and took a long look through them. What I saw surprised me.

There was the great ceiba, buttressed around with its offshoots, and I could see the top of a palm-thatched hut close to the tree. Surrounding the tree and the hut was a square stockade, enclosing a large area of ground. Pacing a beat along two sides of the stockade, which lay under the glasses, was a dusky little soldier with a rifle in the hollow of his arm. Well back of this guarded hut stood a row of thatched hovels with more of the dusky little soldiers, some enjoying the shade and *cigarros* in customary siesta fashion, while others were moving around among a herd of mules.

"We've butted into a small-sized army, Dan," said I, handing the glasses over to him. "What sort of a game would you call this anyway?"

He looked, and as he looked he whistled softly. "Thunder and carry one!" he muttered, still looking. "The treasure and its

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guardian seem to be well taken care of. Now, if there's anything I hate, it's to——"

The words were taken out of his mouth by the distant crack of a rifle, and the glasses were almost taken out of his hands by a bullet. Certainly it was a close call, and was visited upon us by a man who was plainly a marksman. The glasses were ruined, and Pettigrew, a ludicrous surprise in his face, stood for a moment staring downward.

The high grass ran up the inner slope of the basin for some distance, and out of it suddenly arose a dozen heads and shoulders. The sun struck bright gleams from as many rifles.

"Run for it, Dan!" I yelled. "We don't want to stand here and be butchered!"

He muttered something under his breath, flung away the smashed binoculars and took after me across the crest of the ridge. The angle of the brink screened us from the rifles below and gave us a few minutes' grace while the dozen soldiers were climbing to the ridge-top.

CHAPTER XIV

A CHANGE OF PLANS

AT NO TIME in her attempt to get through the gap between the peaks had the *Hawk* risen above the crest of the ridge. It followed, therefore, that those in the basin had had no opportunity to see the air monster put up that losing fight against the wind. The lack of excitement among the huts proved conclusively that the dirigible had not been seen from that quarter. The soldiers who had opened fire on us, it seemed to me, must have been on detached duty. Pettigrew and I had been discovered coming across the ridge-crest, and the little men were so jealous of strangers that they had taken to the tall grass, bided their time and then presented us with their leaden compliments.

"The whole army will be out after us!" panted Pettigrew, as we slipped and slid down the slope toward the balloon.

I had already been turning that contingency over in my mind. Needing my breath for other things than conversation, I vouchsafed no reply. A problem was pestering me: Could we get down two hundred feet of slope and then up into the *Hawk* and away before the soldiers came within gunshot of us?

"What's the trouble?" yelled Trent from the car.

"Made up our minds we'd come back," answered Pettigrew.

"The basin's full of soldiers!" I shouted.

"And they're all after us!" added Pettigrew. "Stand by to trip anchor and slant away!"

Just then I was brought up short at the edge of the rocky shelf. A gap of ten feet separated me from the rope ladder! So far as I was concerned, that hiatus of space might as well have measured ten thousand feet as ten. While I stood there in a panic, listening to a clamor of yells from the ridge-top, Pettigrew came rushing past me. Under my startled eyes he took a running jump from the brink, hung in the air for a fraction of a second, and then collided with the ladder! The *Hawk* ducked and rolled under his suddenly imposed weight, and the ladder danced wildly; but Pettigrew not only held on to his frail support but gave more momentum to its swaying. Back and forth he swung until the ladder came within reach of the ledge.

"Now, Jules!" he yelled.

I hurled myself at the ladder, caught a rung and rode out over space in a scramble with Pettigrew.

"Go on up! Hustle!" he shouted.

I required no urging. Every moment I expected a bullet to pick me off, and I scampered toward the car as though the arch fiend were after me. Already the propellers were singing, and as I tumbled over the rail I saw that Pettigrew had released the drag-rope from the *palo de vaca*. We were moving around in a half-circle preparatory to flying westward.

I looked back at the ridge-top. The dusky little soldiers were there, but they seemed to have been stricken with paralysis. They gaped in awe, and now and then one of them would lift a hand and cross himself. Probably they had never heard or dreamed of such a thing as an airship, and this demon of the sky with its glittering car and its fins beating out their speed-song must have filled their minds with consternation.

Pettigrew regained the car and fell panting to the steel floor. "One shot," he gasped with a breathless attempt at a chuckle, "just one! The *Hawk* had them going, Jules!"

"Incidentally, Dan," I answered, "they also had us going. That was altogether too close for comfort."

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Trent shouted for us to come forward so he could talk with us while attending to the steering. His face glowed as we informed him of our discoveries and gave him the details of our escape.

We went back to the Purgatoire, slowed to a halt, anchored and shut down the motor; and we came together in the cleared space amidships and took to our canvas chairs.

"We flushed the whole Colombian army," said I. "What can three men and an airship do to an army?"

"Blacks and *mestizos!*" sneered Trent. "One look at the *Hawk* had the whole army thrown and hog-tied."

"'Familiarity breeds contempt,'" I quoted. "The next time the army looks, it will probably shoot."

A pained expression crossed Trent's face. "You don't intend to give up just because you found more than you expected in the basin?" he inquired.

"All the treasure in one lone iron box couldn't amount to enough to make the venture worth while!" I declared. "It's a wild-goose chase, and has been from the start. We can't declare war on the Colombian Government without international complications."

"Oh, shucks!" snorted Pettigrew.

"Put that disgust in your pocket, Dan," said I, "and use sense! We're trying something that will stir up the hornets in Bogotá."

"We don't know about that," protested Pettigrew.

"That's the fool part of it," I went on. "If we knew what we were doing it would be different."

"It seems to me," remarked Pettigrew dryly, "that you're losing sight of one very important fact."

"I'm losing sight of a good many important things, Dan, but what's this one?"

"Why, that we've promised Miss Bainbridge to run out this trail. How would you feel to meet Miss Bainbridge in Colon and report that we had been scared out by a handful of toy soldiers?"

Pettigrew had me there. At that time I wouldn't have wagered a copper cent that any of us would ever see Colon again, but even the remote possibility of meeting Miss Bainbridge and offering such a report gave me a spasm of cold shivers. "Well," I frowned, "what had we better do? March down on the Colombians, three strong, and capture the basin?"

"We've got to use the airship."

"We can't. We've tried that and couldn't buck a mere cat's-paw."

"It wasn't a cat's-paw," demurred Trent, rallying to the defense of the *Hawk*. "It was a regular skipper's breeze. But it can't last. We can get in between those peaks to-night."

"That's it, Trent," approved Dan, nodding his head. "We'll sail into the basin and anchor above the ceiba, then Jules and I will shin down the ladder, hoist the iron box with ropes and clear out with it and with the guardian."

"Have you decided," I inquired, "what you will do with the army while all that is going on?"

"The army will be scared out of its black hide!" asserted Pettigrew. "We'll work fast. Before the army recovers its wits we'll be fanning along toward the Isthmus."

"BEAUTIFUL!" I exclaimed. "But just suppose that a few bold spirits among the rank and file begin shooting at the gas-bag? It's so big they could hit it with their eyes shut. It wouldn't take many leaks to scuttle the craft."

"Nothing venture, nothing win," put in Trent, with glimmering eyes. "The change of plan appeals to me."

"You're for it, then?" asked Pettigrew.

"Why, Pettigrew," answered Trent, "I'd hate myself till my dying day if I turned my back on such a prospect!"

"How about you, Jules?" and Pettigrew turned to me.

"It's a gambler's chance," I answered, "and I'll just go along to keep you out of trouble."

"Unanimous!" chirped Pettigrew. "We'll leave the maneuvering of the *Hawk* to you, Trent. Get under way the moment you think everything looks favorable."

"Now that that's settled," said I, "let's make a guess at why the Colombian army is there."

"Let me put in a word," spoke up Trent. "Maybe those fellows are not Government soldiers but insurrectos. Revolutions are worse than the measles, down here. They're chronic. Last year one broke out that promised a new government, for a while, but something happened to the dictator that led the rebellion and the whole business went to

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pieces. When an insurrection is smashed, the remnants hide away until another would-be dictator shows the nerve to lead them. It's possible, just possible, that the people in Bogotá would be delighted if they knew what we're up to."

"Trent," said Pettigrew, "you're a brilliant thinker! We're helping the Colombian Government make war on insurrectos! We'll pull down Old Glory and tuck it away in the flag-locker so as not to embroil the States, then we'll roll up our sleeves as individuals without a country—and wade in! Great!"

"But who are the insurrectos taking such good care of in that hut by the ceiba?" I inquired.

"Why, Jules, the guardian of the box."

"A junta is a revolutionary group—sort of an executive committee. If the International Junta intends to pay out half a million for the box and its guardian, I can't make our other guesses jibe. The insurrectos in the basin, it seems, have built a stockade around one of their number, and are keeping him penned up. Now why——"

"Jules," interrupted Pettigrew, "you're getting over your head—and over mine, too. Forget about the International Junta. That's only a guess of Carlson's, anyway."

"All right, Dan," I assented.

An hour later we had our last meal of the day. Then, an hour after supper, darkness dropped like a black curtain. Trent had figured that there would be a moon, and he was correct. Our venture was to be made without lights, and the moon was a necessity.

Trent went at the work, however, with the usual confidence he displayed in the face of danger. The peaks were lost in the blue haze of the eastern horizon, but Trent had a compass and had charted the course. Through the night he guided us, straight as a crow's flight, back to the peaks. Slowly the two uplifts came out of the gloom, and the *Hawk* pointed for the gap between them. Would the same wind which we had encountered in our first attempt drive us back now? We waited tensely. Without let or pause the dirigible swept in through the gap, then glided out of its shadow and swung on over the basin.

Pettigrew stepped to the rope-ladder, ready to descend and make fast the moment we halted above the ceiba, inside the stockade.

CHAPTER XV

AN OVERWHELMING DISASTER

THE great ceiba was the only tree in the basin. We could see the tree, the neighboring hut and the stockade massed in a single blur of shadow. The *Hawk* was flying low, for the cool, higher altitude had a tremendous effect on our diminished supply of hydrogen. By manipulating the side fins, however, Trent was able to lift the huge fabric until the car safely cleared the topmost branches of the ceiba. The silence that followed the shutting down of the motor and the noise of the propellers was broken by excited yells coming from the shadowy places below. Lights began to appear in the shed barracks, beyond the hut and the stockade.

"Look sharp!" cried Trent. "You fellows have got to be swift and sure or we'll make a mess of this. I have one of the Winchesters, and if gun-work from the car can help you any, count on me. The first thing is to make fast."

Pettigrew was already half-way down the ladder, and I made haste to follow him. Pettigrew was armed with our partnership revolver, and I had Captain Jacobs' "bulldog" in my hip pocket.

Certainly there was not much time to accomplish all that we had to do. The soldiers, whether frightened or no, were already displaying an activity which promised unpleasant results. When I reached Pettigrew, he was twisting a bight of the drag-rope around a branch of the ceiba. I crawled past him.

"A lick and a promise is about all we can give anything just now," he remarked.

"We don't know a thing about this place, Dan," said I, peering sharply around, "and that's where we're badly handicapped."

The ceiba cast a gloom over the area within the stockade that was almost opaque. The darkness was so thick it seemed as though we could have cut it with a knife.

"We know where the hut is, anyhow," flung back Pettigrew, "and that's where we're bound for."

The night opened and took him in. I followed at a run, calling to him as I went. If we both used our voices we could keep track of each other with our ears, if not with our eyes. Pettigrew was slow in answering. When he finally spoke he bumped into me

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while the call was still on his lips. As I staggered back he clutched my arm.

"What I thought was the side of the hut was the wall of the stockade," said he. "It's hog-tight and bull-strong, and spiked along the top. By good luck I bumped into the gate. It was fastened on the *outside!* There were brackets and a bar to fasten it on the inside, and it took me only a minute to shove the bar through the sockets."

"Good work, Dan!" said I. "It's a fool way to have a gate, though—with a bar on the prisoner's side of it."

Just then a light gleamed out of the darkness, no more than a dozen feet from us. A man was standing in the door of the hut, holding a lamp above his head and peering out into the enclosure. He was a white man, and his hair and his heavy mustache were gray. His features were English or American—at least there was nothing Spanish about them. He wore *alpargatas*, or native sandals, trousers and a flannel shirt. Undoubtedly he was surprised.

"*Quién va?*" he shouted, or something to that effect.

"*Amigos,*" answered Pettigrew as we pushed nearer through the small circle of lamplight.

"English?" he demanded, giving us a keen sizing.

"American," said I.

"Thank God!" the man exclaimed fervently. "I've waited long for this hour! How did you come?"

"By airship," said Pettigrew, in a puzzled tone.

"Airship? Ah, yes, that's what the men were talking about this afternoon."

"Are you the guardian?" demanded Pettigrew.

"Guardian?" echoed the other blankly.

"Yes, yes," went on Pettigrew impatiently, "the guardian of the iron box."

"I see," and the man laughed. "There's nothing valuable in the iron box now, so don't bother with it."

"What have you done with the loot?" cried Pettigrew.

"Loot? I don't believe I understand you."

"We can't stand here squandering time in idle talk. Look!"

A glow of light, from half a dozen different points, shone over the top of the stockade. The lights shifted rapidly and voices could be heard and a patter of running feet.

"The soldiers are getting here from the barracks," said I. "Are you the only man in this stockade?"

"The only man except my Chinese servant."

"You're the one we want," declared Pettigrew. "Come with us!"

"I'll have to get into the rest of my clothes first. If you'll wait——"

"No time to wait!" Pettigrew knocked the lamp out of his hand and grabbed him by the arm. "We're likely to get tripped up on this little deal if we don't hurry!"

The gray-haired man did not hang back or indulge in any protests. Pettigrew raced off with him, and I hurried along close behind. The torches on the other side of the wall afforded us a good light to work by inside the enclosure. We could see, with tolerable distinctness, the dangling rope ladder against the darker foliage of the ceiba. Overhead, like a great, ominous shadow, swung the airship.

"Climb!" ordered Pettigrew, halting at the foot of the ladder and giving the gray-haired man a push.

The man kicked off his *alpargatas* and mounted nimbly in his bare feet.

Meanwhile there had been a tremendous smashing at the stockade gate. That the gate must yield presently there was no doubt.

"So far, so good," muttered Pettigrew, "but not so blamed far either! I'm all at sea about that chest, Jules."

"Fiend take the chest!" I cried. "Let's get up to the car and get out of here!" I was already on the ladder. As I looked up, I had a dim view of Trent helping the gray-haired man over the rail.

Crash! went the gate. I halted on a swaying rung and cast a wild glance at the entrance to the stockade. A mob with torches was rushing into the enclosure. A flash of red split the darkness above us and the hoarse cough of a Winchester echoed out. Trent was trying to help us, but it struck me as a foolish proceeding. His shot would invite a return volley, and that might be bad for us, and for the balloon.

"Can I help you, Dan?" I shouted.

He was just below me, working frantically to get the drag-rope clear of the limb. "Go on up, Jules!" he answered hoarsely. "The rope's clear."

The rifle-shot had not dismayed the soldiers. They did not open fire with their weapons but flung themselves at the ladder.

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I could hear the motor humming and the propellers beginning to screech. But the *Hawk* did not move. Fully a dozen men had hold of the ladder and were swinging on it. Their weight held the dirigible as though it were anchored.

"One of the pesky Dagos has grabbed my feet, Jules!" yelled Pettigrew.

I started to slide down the other side of the ladder to help Pettigrew clear of his entanglement. Before I could get actively to work, however, an overwhelming disaster precipitated itself upon us. The strain on the rope ladder caused it to break away from the car. It fell, throwing Pettigrew and me into a demoralized heap of squirming and cursing men.

I was not injured in any way, as my fall had been broken by the men under me. Struggling fiercely to right myself, I had a fleeting glimpse of the *Hawk* darting off and away against a background of stars.

Rifles began to sputter outside the stockade. At last the insurrectos were beginning to use their guns. There was no time for further observations on my part, for my dusky antagonists rushed at me from every side. Pettigrew was already down, heaving and fighting under a veritable smother of angry foes.

We had made our play, and lost! That was the one thought uppermost in my mind as I struck right and left with my fists and made an unsuccessful attempt to get at the revolver in my hip pocket. I was caught by the arms, by the throat, and around the waist and knees. Down I went like a bit of drift in an eddy. I remember how the tide closed over me, how bare feet trampled my face and *alpargatas* pounded my ribs, and then something collided with my head and reason went under a cloud.

CHAPTER XVI

PRISONERS

I WAS on a rush mat, when I drifted back to earth, on a rush mat in a thatched hovel, a Chinaman's knee under my head, a Chinaman's yellow hand working a coconut dipper back and forth between a calabash of water and my face, and a Chinaman's slant eyes glimmering down into mine. I spluttered, half-drowned by the Chinaman's generous use of water in reviving me. A grin creased his parchment-like face.

"That'll do, John," came the voice of Pettigrew. "He's all right now."

I sat up and turned my eyes in Pettigrew's direction. He was squatted on the same rush mat, leaning languidly against a post that helped to support the framework of the thatched wall.

"Where are the soldiers, Dan?" I inquired

"They've shut the gate and gone outside to talk it over," he answered.

"And where's the airship?"

"Don't ask me, Jules. Trent and that old seed we picked up here have gone away together. Let's wish them a pleasant voyage and let it go at that."

"And we're under guard inside the stockade?"

"We are. I suppose we've committed some heinous offense, although you can search me if I know what it is. The soldiers dumped us in here, stripped us of our personal property, and went out and slammed the gate."

"It amounts to this, then, that we've exchanged places with the man we found in the hut. Who was he, anyway?"

"He didn't have time to tell us."

"Why don't you ask the Chinaman?"

"He's a mute. He can hear, all right, but he can't talk."

"Why don't you talk with the soldiers?"

"I asked them what was wrong, but they shut up like a lot of clams. I tried to listen while they gabbled among themselves, but I don't know their kind of Spanish."

My head was throbbing painfully. I closed my eyes for a moment to steady myself.

"Do you think the *Hawk* will come back for us, Dan?" I inquired presently.

"Not unless Trent is more foolish than I think he is, Jules," Pettigrew replied. "If the *Hawk* ever shows up in this basin again, she'll be riddled from stem to gudgeon. She got away this time only because the little black and brown insurrectos felt too sure of our whole outfit."

"Couldn't we get over the stockade fence in spite of the guards?"

"We could, I believe, but what would be the use? Where'd we go if we succeeded in getting out? You know what the country is between here and the Purgatoire."

"Do you think it's a firing-squad for two in the morning?"

Pettigrew showed a bit of real feeling as he answered: "We've been through a good

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many ups and downs, Jules, since we first fell in with each other at New Orleans. If it's to be a firing-squad, I don't know of any one I'd rather take the One-Way Trail with than with you."

I put out my hand and he caught it just as one comrade ought to strike palms with another at such a time.

"And now to bed!" said he, getting up. "The old Unknown was pretty comfortably fixed here, considering the habits of the country."

There were two hammocks swung at an easy height across the end of the room. They were draped with mosquito-bar and looked extremely inviting. The Chinaman helped me into the swinging bed and I soon lost my troubles in slumber.

IT WAS morning when I woke up. The sun was stabbing his long beams through the thatched wall, and the sweet, lushy smell of the grass on the *estero* was as different as could be from the stuffy miasma that used to greet my awakening at the *tambo*.

"Come here a minute, Jules." It was Pettigrew calling, of course, and as I flopped out of the hammock I saw him standing in front of a small cupboard hung against the wall. It pleased me to find that I had been greatly refreshed by my night's rest and that my bruised head troubled me but little.

"What do you want, Dan?" I inquired.

"Look there," he answered, pointing to a shelf in the cupboard.

I saw three bottles containing red, blue and black liquids, half of a wooden sphere, about the size of a halved coconut, gouged with holes in which stood queer-looking needles, and, lastly, a horn handle, like the handle of an awl.

"What's that?" I asked.

"It's a tattooing outfit," Pettigrew answered. "Here must be the place where the Yip Wing Development Association got its start."

Naturally, I was surprised. "You think that the Unknown tattooed that map on Yip Wing's back?" said I.

"I think that would be a pretty good guess. But come outside and take a splash. John has breakfast pretty near ready."

There was a bench beside the door with a piece of soap, a bucket of water and a rough towel. I got into the bucket as far as I could and felt even more refreshed after I had scrubbed and rubbed myself dry.

The Chinaman appeared around a corner of the hut and kicked against the thatch by way of drawing our attention. He made a motion suggestive of eating, and retired.

"That's his way of telling us that the chuck's waiting," said Pettigrew.

Under the ceiba a table had been placed and spread. There was a real cloth and real crockery, and a meal which, considering the situation, might have been termed elaborate. We had coffee, with coarse sugar and evaporated milk, *arepas* or corn cakes, and a sort of ragout called *sancocho*. And this had all been prepared on a *tulpa*, a simple outdoor contrivance formed out of three stones. The meal over, we had cigarettes. The Chinaman furnished the materials and rolled them for us.

"As near as I can find out," remarked Pettigrew, over our cigarettes, "the old Unknown has been here for some sort of a while. He was allowed all the comforts of home, along with a Chinaman to look after him, in spite of the fact that he was in durance vile. At a guess, Yip Wing, a long time ago, served the Unknown. The Unknown fixed up that map on his back and cast Yip Wing adrift. Perhaps there was a place where Yip Wing was to go to secure aid that might effect the Unknown's rescue, and perhaps it was only a hit-and-miss attempt of the Unknown to arouse interest in some stranger and bring an expedition to the cross on the map—in other words, this basin."

"But why was the Unknown a prisoner?"

"I pass. The whys and wherefores of all this mysterious business, Jules, are a closed book, so far as we are concerned. You and I may be a couple of closed books, too, before many hours. What's become of the Unknown, Trent, and the *Hawk* we may never know, any more than what's happened to Miss Bainbridge and her father. Even if we ever get away from here, and out of Colombia, I haven't much confidence that we'll meet Miss Bainbridge in Colon."

I reflected for a moment while waiting for the Chinaman to roll me another smoke.

"If the Unknown has made good his escape, Dan," said I, "I rather incline to the belief that the insurrectos won't shoot us out of hand. They'll hold us as hostages."

"That's a pleasant theory," returned Pettigrew, "but untenable. Far-fetched, Jules, far-fetched."

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"In what way?"

"The Unknown knows his business. He wouldn't come back here if the lives of a dozen hostages depended on it."

"Perhaps he left note-books, private papers, or something else behind that would give a clue to his identity, and to the cause of his being held here?"

"I had thought of that, and I got up an hour before you did just to ransack the place. The Unknown left nothing but a few odds and ends of wearing apparel. I asked the Chinaman if there was anything else, and he shook his head. The Unknown was mighty careful not to have any incriminating evidence around."

"Did you see anything of an iron box?"

"That must have been a fiction," said he, gloomily. "This hasn't turned out to be much of a treasure-hunt after all, Jules. If we had hung out at Quibdo, and tickled the alcalde's palm with 'balboas,' we'd have got ahead a lot faster."

"I wouldn't have staid on the Atrato another month for all the gold Pizarro stole from the Incas!" I declared.

"Irrespective of our feelings in the matter," returned Pettigrew grimly, "I doubt whether we'll ever get the chance to do any more digging in the river bars, or that it would be safe for us, even if we had the chance. The Don is out of sympathy with us, and it's a cinch that Captain Jacobs isn't any more friendly. We——"

There came a rattle at the gate.

"Ah," murmured Pettigrew, "somebody's coming. I wonder if it's the firing-squad?"

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF MYSTERIES

THE gate opened and five dusky little soldiers pattered through and into the enclosure. All wore the native sandals and high-crowned hats. There was nothing resembling a uniform in the whole lot, but one had a machete girded about his waist while the remaining four carried rifles. We inferred that the man with the machete was an officer.

Briskly the five marched toward us. Within a few feet of the table they halted, faces set and ominous. The officer said something sharply which we could not understand and motioned for us to rise.

We got up, marched away from the table and stood shoulder to shoulder. At a command from the officer the four privates placed themselves two in front and two behind us. The officer drew his machete, reached out and prodded me in the back with its point.

"That means 'march,'" said Pettigrew.

With quickened pulses and a heart that pounded, I started off at Pettigrew's side. Two and two we passed out of the opened gate, crossed twenty feet of beaten earth in front of the stockade and halted close to a line of waiting mules, all the mules saddled and all bridled but two. These two had ropes around their necks and were secured to the mules ahead. At least ten men were standing to their mounts and waiting for the guard of five to bring Pettigrew and me out of the stockade.

"No firing-squad about this, Jules," said Pettigrew, "at least, not right away."

The officer laid a hand on Pettigrew's shoulder and, with the point of his machete, indicated one of the bridleless mules.

"You want me to climb aboard that mule, eh?" remarked Pettigrew. "Well, I'll do it, of course, for just now you're the doctor, but before we start on this little canter I'd like to find out where you're taking us, and what for. Speak English?"

The officer stared at him with a face that was unpleasantly blank. Pettigrew repeated his request for information in his best Spanish, and won a look that was even more blank and more unpleasant. The officer lifted his machete for a blow at Pettigrew with the cutting edge, gave a sharp yell and pointed to the mule.

"That's the way he receives my request for an explanation, Jules!" Pettigrew called to me as he started for the mule.

While my friend was mounting, the officer came to where I was standing and ordered me to the other led animal. I got into the saddle without comment.

We were to be taken somewhere under guard. That fact was sufficiently plain. The detachment consisted of fifteen armed men with the officer at their head. From the back of his mule at the top of the column the officer barked a command. At once the detachment got under way, trickling off across the basin toward the peaks. Neither Pettigrew nor I was tied in any way. Between him and me rode the man to whose mount my own was secured. This man had

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a rifle across his saddle and kept his eyes trained on Pettigrew. Behind me was an armed soldier equally alert. For the matter of that, all the soldiers made it a point to keep track of us. Rifles were carried in readiness for instant use, and an attempt to jump and run would have been equivalent to suicide. The line of mounted men indulged in little talk. Their faces were ominous and their silence suggestive.

"Where do you guess we're going, Jules?" Pettigrew called back to me.

"I'm not doing any guessing, Dan."

"We're heading through the gap. That looks as though we might be on our way to the Purgatoire."

"I don't know about that. If I've got the landmarks right, about the only way to get out of the basin is through the gap."

Pettigrew threw back his head and searched the sky. His vague hopes, I felt sure, were centering about the *Hawk*. But what could the *Hawk* do, even if Trent were able, or disposed, to do anything to help us? The craft's approach would be the signal for the soldiers to open fire. Even if the gas-bag was not hopelessly ruined, Trent and the Unknown would surely be shot out of the car.

"I don't like this suspense," Pettigrew resumed finally. "Even if we're to be shot, it's a consolation to know it beforehand."

"It's neither hanging nor shooting," I declared.

"How do you know?"

"A rope over a branch of the ceiba, or standing us with our backs to the stockade wall, is all that would be necessary for either method. People in this *mañana* country don't take any more trouble than they have to. If we were to be sponged out in either of the ways you suggest, Dan, the scene wouldn't be shifted from the hut."

"That's true enough, Jules."

"Possibly," I ventured, "we're to be sent down the river, or around by the Gulf and the Magdalena to Bogotá."

We were passing through the gap at that moment and the inner slopes of the peaks caught up my voice and echoed it to the officer's ears. He rose in his stirrups, faced around and barked furiously. The next moment, when Pettigrew tried to say something, he found himself looking into the muzzle of a gun. He bit off his words and sank silently back in his saddle.

When we left the western end of the gap, there began for us the most hair-raising experience in rough-country travel that it has ever been my lot to pass through.

We climbed or descended at least five vertical miles for every horizontal mile we put behind us. There were natural causeways of rock, barely wide enough for the mules' hoofs, giving us passage from brink to brink of dizzy canyons. There were little shelf-like paths that hugged the breast of a cliff, with blank wall for hundreds of feet on one side and only space on the other—paths so narrow that we had to ride sideways, woman-fashion, in order to give the mules the few inches of space occupied by our legs on the cliff side of the saddles. There were descents down which the mules had to slide, bunching all four hoofs together and keeping right-side up by some marvel of animal ingenuity; and there were scaling feats where the rider helped his mule by reaching forward and grabbing a bush that grew in the trail the brute was to pass over.

Yet, notwithstanding these tremendous difficulties, the hardy soldiers kept their single-file alignment and, for the most part, the distances that separated each from the other. I always had Pettigrew clearly before me, and the soldier to whose mule my own mount was tied always had Pettigrew under the muzzle of his gun.

We had been slipping and sliding and scrambling for hours, it seemed to me, when we reached another goat-patch that crossed the face of a cliff. There was not more than twenty feet of up-and-down wall between the path and the top of the cliff, and this also was rather soothing to the nerves; but the path was about sixteen inches wide, and overlooked a mile of terrifying emptiness.

I am led to specify this path thus particularly because it was while we were traversing it that a most astounding thing happened—a thing that was thrilling enough, in all truth, but less memorable on that account than because it represented the first of a baffling series of mysteries.

I had acquired the habit of shutting my eyes, in the most trying places, and leaving everything to my mule. I did that before we were very far along this goat-path, and when the startling event happened, it came with the paralyzing suddenness of a thunder clap.

Something struck me about the shoulders. Instantly there was a terrific pressure

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that pinioned my arms to my sides. My mule dropped away from under me, and the thought speared my brain that an accident had happened and that I had been launched from the edge of the path. Other yells were added to mine. My eyes were open, of course, and staring. I saw Pettigrew also separate from his mule. He was not going over the cliff, however, but was sliding straight up into the air. The secret of his flight was a rope with a noosed end. The rope had snared him and was snaking him up the twenty-foot wall above us!

The man who rode directly in front of me lifted his rifle. Before the weapon could be discharged a shot sounded from aloft. The soldier dropped his gun, caught his breast with both hands and slid slowly out of his saddle, over the edge of the path, and shot from sight into space.

I saw no more of the soldier, nor of any of the others comprising that detachment of insurrectos from the basin. Like Pettigrew, I had been darting straight upward. I jolted sharply against the crest of the wall, was grasped by strong hands and dragged over to level ground. At the same moment the rifles clamored from the goat-path and a hail of lead splintered the rocks and went singing harmlessly into the upper air.

CHAPTER XVIII

MORE MYSTERIES

THREE men—*mestizos*, from the looks of them—had dropped the ropes over Pettigrew and me. Each rope had been hitched to a mule and the mule, in hauling us up, had merely to walk away from the edge of the cliff.

All told, there were five mules. Two of the animals must have been for Pettigrew and me, and the forethought suggested far-reaching plans on the part of the *mestizos*. They were rough, determined-looking fellows, those three men. Bare-legged, big-hatted, girded about with arsenals of small arms and carrying rifles, they appeared fit to tackle the whole basin detachment in the open.

"Wouldn't this give you a jolt, Jules?" were Pettigrew's first words as he scrambled to his feet.

Two of the *mestizos* were coolly coiling in the ropes. The third man approached smilingly and passed his sharp glance from Pettigrew to me. "*Amigos*," he remarked, indicating himself and his two companions.

"You're friends, eh?" said Pettigrew. "This doesn't happen, then, to be a case of out of the frying-pan and into the fire?"

"*Amigos*," repeated the man, and "*Amigos*" echoed the other two as they bound their coiled ropes and started for the mules.

"We understand that," went on Pettigrew, "and we're taking your word for it that you are friends. You hauled us over the cliff and saved us from the gang below, but isn't it just possible that the gang below may get up here somehow? I see you're prepared with saddle stock to give us a lift. Hadn't we better be starting?"

The man smirked. "*Amigos*," he continued to declare.

Pettigrew tried out his Spanish on him, but protestations of friendship were all he secured in response. Not a word was vouchsafed as to who these *mestizos* were, by whose authority they were acting, or where we were to be taken. The mules were led up and Pettigrew and I were requested to mount. What the men in the goat-path were doing we did not discover. Their activities, whatever they might be, were causing the *mestizos* little uneasiness. The top of the cliff was flat, and over this level stretch we traveled for at least a mile, leaving the goat-path and the men from the basin farther and farther behind us.

"I wonder if it's possible, Jules," said Pettigrew, "that we're asleep and dreaming all this?"

"We're awake, all right," I answered, "and we're in luck, there's no sort of doubt about that. We've been rescued by friends, and a prettier rescue I have never read of or heard about. Somebody planned the whole thing out, Dan. It wasn't just a happen-chance."

"The plans were quickly laid. We were captured last night, and between that time and the moment we were snatched out of our saddles on the goat-path somebody must have been working hard for us. Could it have been Trent and the Unknown?"

"Not Trent. I don't believe he could get these *mestizos* to work through such a trick. He's as much a stranger in these parts as you or I. The Unknown may have helped Trent send the rescuers after us. Just how many *mestizos* the Unknown has up his sleeve is a matter of conjecture."

"Part of the plan appears to call for keep-

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ing us in the dark," fretted Pettigrew, "and I always like to know what I'm doing."

Again he tried to develop something from the *mestizos*. They all smiled good-naturedly, laid their hands on their hearts and repeated their everlasting "*Amigos*." Finally Pettigrew gave up, and we allowed the three men to lead us blindly.

On leaving that long level stretch we plunged into more nerve-wracking country, but it was a short session we had with it, for we dropped suddenly into swamp-lands and the jungle. Through the muck we splashed and floundered, dodging lianas and fallen trees, and stirring up a swarm of flapping, screeching, chattering tropical life as we proceeded. It must have been mid-afternoon when we halted at the brink of a sluggish stream. While we sat our mules, one of the *mestizos* dismounted and disappeared. Presently he came back with a *bongo*. The leader of the *mestizos* motioned Pettigrew and me to get down from our mules and to get into the dugout. We obeyed, and the leader followed us into the ungainly craft. The other *mestizo* hitched a bell around the neck of the mule he was riding and started back through the forest. The four of us were left alone with the *bongo*.

The leader placed himself at the bow and picked up a spare pole. The other man with his pole was at the stern. A strong shove carried us well out into the stream, and we floated away. It was all silently done. Every shift in the circumstances led certainly to some new move equally certain.

"It's a well-oiled machine," I heard Pettigrew mutter. "We have powerful friends somewhere, and they have set the chain in motion. But the mystery of it all is—is maddening!"

IT WAS just falling dusk when the *bongo* poled up to a bit of rising ground that held a cabin on stilts. We went ashore in obedience to instructions from the captain of the *mestizos*, and, in the waning light, saw the broad reaches of the Atrato on the other side of the low bank. By notched poles we climbed to the second story of the hut, and the *mestizos* began preparing supper.

When we had finished with the meal, our majordomo came up from below with a bundle. His first move was to light a candle, then he unrolled his bundle and showed us two outfits of soiled *mestizo* clothes—two-piece suits of white cotton that had evidently not been in the wash for some time—two high-crowned hats and two pairs of *alpargatas*. We were made to lay aside our own clothes and get into the *mestizo* outfit.

We balked when it came to exchanging our shoes for the sandals, but the majordomo insisted, sounding the gamut with that one word "*Amigos*." Then, when we stood forth hatted and shod like a pair of mongrels, our *mestizo* friend developed a bottle of brownish stuff and a rag. With the stain he smeared our faces and throats, arms and hands, and our legs from the knees down. The result was startling. I could judge, from looking at Dan, what the transformation had done for me.

The clothes we had discarded were rolled into a compact bundle and tied around with cords. The majordomo descended, and we were left to smoke and talk and fight mosquitoes.

The night was well advanced and Pettigrew and I were dozing when our *mestizo* aroused us. Taking our bundle, we descended and found one of the river *champans* awaiting us. The *champan* was manned by two coal-black negroes. No explanations, no instructions passed between the *mestizo* and the negroes—at least, not in our hearing. The *mestizo* waved us aboard the bamboo craft, shook hands with us, called us "*Amigos*," laid his hand on his heart and retreated into the shadows. That was the last we ever saw of him.

The *champan* was hooded amidships, and one of the negroes invited us, by signs, to crawl under the hood. Pettigrew wasted a few minutes trying to discover something through the negroes, something that would let in a ray of understanding on all these mysterious ministrations. But he was as unsuccessful with the negroes as he had been with the *mestizos*, and he finally dropped to his knees in disgust and crawled after me into the gloom of the cabin. The *champan* men began poling, and the water bubbled under us as we started down-stream.

"We might just as well be a pair of dummies as anything else, Jules," grunted Pettigrew. "What have you got under you—blankets?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Good-night," said he shortly.

It seemed to me as though I had hardly closed my eyes before I opened them again

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in broad daylight. The *champan* was jumping around like a cork in a whirlpool.

Pettigrew and I rolled out of the cabin and braced ourselves upright in the heaving cockpit. The next moment we wished we had kept ourselves out of sight.

A steamer had passed us and we had been caught in the rough water in its wake. But the steamer had not been satisfied merely to pass. It was circling around to head down-stream and come up on the other side of the *champan*. The boat was the *Hondo*, and Captain Jacobs was leaning from the top of his bridge and ordering us to heave to.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LINE OF LEAST RESISTANCE

"HERE'S a go!" muttered Pettigrew. "If Jacobs tries to snatch us off of this *champan* there's going to be fireworks!"

"Get busy at something!" said I. "Make the people on the gunboat think we're part of the *champan's* crew!"

The negroes were not fluttered in the least. One was forward and one aft, both steadying the *champan* with long oars. Pettigrew, grasping the logic of my suggestion, picked up the end of a coil of rope and began unlaying it. I kept my head down over some blankets, which I had pulled out of the cubby-hole under the hood and which I fell to folding with great care. First, however, I had handed Pettigrew his broad-brimmed hat and had donned my own.

The *Hondo* stopped her engines. "Where you niggers going?" shouted Jacobs.

"*Tolo, Señor Capitan,*" answered one of the dusky boatmen.

"Where from?"

"*Quibdo.*"

"Have you run afoul of any white men on the river?"

"*No, Señor Capitan.*"

"A thousand *pesos* to you if you find and hold them, *sabe?*"

"*Si, Señor Capitan.*"

"*Any* white men—Americanos."

"*Si, Señor Capitan.*"

I looked up. Jacobs was measuring the boat and its occupants with his eyes, and we crossed glances. But there was not a flicker of recognition in his face. He grunted, touched something, and we heard the tinkle of a bell in the engine-room. The *Hondo's* stern wheel gathered motion and she turned gracefully up-stream and *chuff-chuffed* in the direction of Quibdo. Pettigrew dropped his piece of rope and fell back with a roar of laughter. "Never knew us!" he gasped. "The old shellback never had a notion!"

"By Jupiter," I gasped, intensely relieved, "that was the closest yet!"

"And think of two negroes, who probably never had more than a dozen *pesos* all at one time in their lives, side-stepping a thousand dollars just to keep us out of the *Hondo!*"

Pettigrew got up, stepped to the negro in the stern and stretched out his hand. "Shake!" said he. "Your skin's black but your heart's as white as they make 'em!"

The negro grinned and clasped hands with Pettigrew. "*Amigos!*" he said, as he flashed his teeth.

From that time on until four days had passed we treated those black-skinned boatmen as brothers. Pettigrew and I took our turn at the poles and paddles, working like beavers by day and sleeping like dead men by night. At the end of the fourth day we reached Tolo, on the edge of the Gulf of Darien.

It was dark when we tied up, and one of the negroes had left immediately for the town while the other kept us carefully under hatches. In an hour the missing negro returned with a little Spaniard in a white suit. We were ordered ashore and the Spaniard laughed a little as he took us by the hand.

"You have had a hard time, señors," said he, in very good English, "but your troubles are almost at an end. You will be so good as to come with me."

"Where are you going to take us?" asked Pettigrew.

"To comfortable quarters, señor," was the answer. "You will not have much time to sleep, as I must forward you to Cartagena before dawn."

"I'm not much in love with Cartagena just now," demurred Pettigrew.

"You will leave Cartagena almost as soon as you reach there," said he, "and it is not suspected that you are at the seacoast. They are hunting for you in the forests around Quibdo. Come," and the Spaniard cast an uneasy glance around him, "it is not well for us to remain here talking."

We turned to bid farewell to the negroes. We did not know their names, nor the secret of all their loyalty to us, but we held them in high regard.

"Never mind," said the Spaniard, as

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Pettigrew deplored his inability to reward the *champan* men, "they are but cogs in the wheel. They had their work to do, and they have done it."

The Spaniard led us into the town by dark and devious ways, and finally to a spacious house in a palm garden. We were shown to a room where there was plenty of soap, water and towels, and we rid ourselves of the last of the stain that had made us *mestizos*. Our host had taken charge of our bundle of clothes, and out of this bundle he returned to us only our shoes. With the shoes came clean underwear and linen, fresh straw hats, stockings, collars and two suits of khaki. "The Spaniard is a good guesser," remarked Dan, as he got into his clothes. "These suits are not far from being a fit."

Our host came to our room with a box of cigars and a little bag which jingled as he dropped it on a table.

"It may be," he smiled, "that you are anxious to know something, yes?"

"That's a bull's-eye hit, *amigo!*" Pettigrew answered. "You've landed with both feet, first clatter out of the box!"

"I regret very much that I can not tell you all you may wish to know," said the Spaniard, "but what little I am at liberty to explain I shall proceed to offer."

HE PRESENTED the cigars, and while we were sitting in comfortable chairs and smoking, our host answered a few questions.

"First," said Pettigrew, "let us know your name, my friend."

"That is not allowed," he answered. "Not that I do not trust you, but I, like the *champan* men, am a mere cog in the wheel. The secret must remain buried."

"By whose orders were we helped out of the hands of the insurrectos?"

"You have got it wrong," laughed the Spaniard. "You were helped by the insurrectos, and out of the hands of the Government troops."

"Well!" gasped Pettigrew. "No wonder you fellows want to keep the secret buried! But who first started the wheel to turning?"

"The man who escaped from the Government stronghold in the airship."

"The Unknown! Then he got away?"

"He did, thanks to you."

"Where is he? Where's Trent? What became of the airship?"

"Ah, you ask so many things, and all at once, señor! The Unknown, as you call him, is safely out of the country. The airship brought him to Tolo three days ago. For one day and one night he occupied this room"—the Spaniard looked around the chamber as though he thought it had been highly honored—"and then he left for Trinidad on a British steamer. As for the airship, that is now in the bottom of the Gulf of Darien. It met with disaster. Fortunately Gen—the Unknown and Señor Trent escaped. Before leaving the Purgatoire, the Unknown made arrangements with various cogs in the wheel, señors, to bring you to Tolo. With me he made other arrangements, which I shall now proceed to carry out. Really, although I regret much, this is all I can tell you."

He took the bag from the table and placed it in Pettigrew's hand. "Arrangements are made for you to take the *Caribbean*, early to-morrow, for Puerto Limon——"

"I don't want to go to Puerto Limon!" cried Pettigrew. "Colon's my port."

"Colon is not safe," was the answer. "Everything is in readiness at Puerto Limon. When you arrive there, you will know more as you find it out. Your passage is booked as Señor Brown and Señor Smith. Your tickets are in the bag, together with a little gold for immediate expenses. As for the little steamer that takes you to Cartagena, she is but another cog in the wheel."

"Wheels, wheels," muttered Pettigrew, "my head's full of wheels!"

"Then, señor, sleep until I shall call you. I would not disrobe, for your hours of rest will be few. *Buenas noches!*"

The door closed on our host, and Pettigrew and I, without waiting further, sprawled upon the canopied bed and snatched our forty winks against the Spaniard's summons. The summons came all too quickly, and we hustled away in our khaki clothes, joined the mysterious Spaniard and accompanied him to a wharf where a dinky little steamer was puffing and snorting.

Our destination was reached at sunrise, and we had just time to take ourselves aboard the *Caribbean* when the ship's bell rang to warn visitors ashore. Pettigrew and I leaned over the rail and watched the walled town, with its romantic past, melt away behind us.

"I wonder if that's La Popa Hill," inquired Pettigrew, pointing to an indigo-blue eminence that was last to fade from our sight.

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"It is, my friend," came a familiar voice from close at hand.

"Trent!" gulped Pettigrew, "by the seven holy spritsails!"

"I beg your pardon," returned the aerial roustabout, "but my name is Jones. Am I mistaken? Are you not Brown and Smith?"

"Sure!" grinned Pettigrew.

CHAPTER XX

IN QUARANTINE

WE FOUND an obscure and comfortable place under an awning of the after-deck. There we pulled our chairs together and exchanged confidences. Trent told how the Unknown had wanted to return to the basin and do something for us, and how he, Trent, had been compelled almost to use force in persuading him that such a course was not advisable. The *Hawk*, obedient to instructions from the Unknown, had anchored at the mouth of the Purgatoire, and the Unknown had descended the ladder and disappeared into the woods. He was gone two hours, and when he returned to the airship he assured Trent that he had set a plan in motion which would accomplish our release.

"Then," said Trent, "we started down the Atrato. No trouble developed, but we made up our minds that it would be best to anchor low down over the forest during the day, and travel only by night. I must say we had a nice, pleasant trip to the gulf, but we got our whack, all right, when we sighted the sea. A wind struck us and the big bag buckled and came pretty near turning inside out. Then, on top of that, we broke a propeller and a blade of it was thrown into the bag, ripping a hole in it as big as a barrel. That settled it. We dropped into the gulf, but close ashore, so we could swim out. The Unknown led the way to Tolo and we called on the same Spaniard that did things for you. The Spaniard was delighted to see the Unknown, and they palavered a lot, but not around where I could hear. I was given a new outfit of clothes and the name of Jones and sent to Cartagena on the same little pop-bottle that toted you. But meeting you here was a surprise, a big surprise."

"Have you heard anything about Carlson and Jorkins?" I asked.

"They're in Barranquilla. The *Hondo* brought them down."

"Out of trouble?" queried Pettigrew.

"They hadn't much to get out of after they proved they weren't gun-runners. I got the news from the first officer of this boat. The *Caribbean* put in at Barranquilla."

"I'm glad they're foot-loose," said Pettigrew. "Carlson's a measly sort, and Jorkins isn't much better for backing him, but I'd hate to think they were holed away in some Colombian prison on account of what we did with the *Hawk*."

"What are you fellows going to do after you reach Puerto Limon?" asked Trent.

"I'm for the States, if I've money enough left to get there," said I.

"He's fond of Broadway," explained Pettigrew to Trent. "Whenever he gets homesick he talks about it. As for me, I'm going to the Isthmus and hunt for the Bainbridges."

"Come with me, you fellows," suggested Trent, with brightening eye. "They're starting something in Honduras, and maybe one of us can get to be dictator."

"Never! Not on your life!" I declared. "I can't enjoy myself so near the equator."

IN DUE course we sighted the lowlands of Costa Rica and presently came to anchor in the Puerto Limon roadstead, half a rifle-shot from the ancient island of Quiribiri.

We were unpleasantly surprised to learn, from the health officer who boarded us, that the plague was raging in Trinidad, from which place the *Caribbean* had started, and that those who could not show a clean bill were to be quarantined. Most of the passengers had health-certificates and were not molested, but Pettigrew, Trent and I underwent a severe examination. We were healthy enough, but that fact didn't seem to count; so we were ordered to Quiribiri, vaccinated and put ashore.

Pettigrew, Trent and I were allowed the use of a cottage set back in a grove of palms and with a filigree-work of flowers all over the front yard.

On the afternoon of the second day of our probation in quarantine, a stranger dropped in on us and wanted to know whether we were Brown, Smith and Jones. We told him he could call us that, and he came up on the piazza, reclined in a chair and took his alligator bag on his knees.

"Brown, Jones and Smith are the names

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you bear now," said he, "but what are your real names?"

"What's yours, first?" returned Pettigrew. "This combination has been taking too many leaps in the dark."

"My name's Sergeant," was the reply. He leaned forward and dropped his voice to a whisper as he added, "Representing the International Junta of New York, London and Belize."

Pettigrew lay back in his chair. "I'm beginning to rise you," said he. "Suppose I were to tell you that my name's Dan Pettigrew, that my friend here is Jules Leffingwell, and that the man in the hammock is Trent? What then?"

"Then," smiled Sergeant, "I would have to tell you that you were sent to quarantine for a purpose—a purpose which I am now about to fulfill." He opened his alligator bag and took out paper money, real United States paper money, with a yellow-backed thousand-dollar bill on the top. Trent saw the money and got out of the hammock.

"Sign this receipt," went on Sergeant, handing a paper to Pettigrew.

Somewhat dazed, Pettigrew read the paper aloud:

"Received of James Sergeant One Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars in lieu of six shares of stock in The Yip Wing Development Association."

I fell back in my chair, limp and bewildered. Pettigrew got up and staggered to the edge of the piazza, where he leaned weakly against a post. Trent looked at the bunch of bills in Sergeant's hand and whistled.

"What's the matter?" asked Sergeant.

Pettigrew turned around slowly. "I wasn't looking for that investment to turn out so well," said he.

"This is simply a commercial transaction," went on Sergeant briskly.

"I suppose so, I suppose so," and Pettigrew picked up the fountain pen, steadied his nerves and scribbled his name. "But don't, for heaven's sake," he implored, "show that to the authorities in Bogotá!"

"We're as anxious to keep it quiet as you are. Mr. Leffingwell will please sign."

Tremblingly I traced my name under Pettigrew's.

"Count it please," and Sergeant threw the bundle of bills carelessly down on the cribbage-board.

"One hundred and fifty thousand-dollar bills!" announced Pettigrew, in a hollow voice.

"Very good," said Sergeant, closing the alligator bag with a snap and getting up. "You can leave quarantine whenever you get ready. Good afternoon, gentlemen."

HE STARTED off nonchalantly, but Pettigrew had him in three jumps. Grabbing his arm, he dragged him back and pushed him into the chair he had recently vacated.

"You don't get away from here, Sergeant," cried Pettigrew, "until you tell us something!"

"But my orders ——"

"Hang your orders! We've been through trouble with all the trimmings and we've got a right to be told something about what we've done. Who's the Unknown, the gray-haired old seed we helped take away from the foothills?"

"General Jackson," said Sergeant.

"Who in Sam Hill is General Jackson?"

"I'm telling you this under protest——"

"I don't care why you're telling it, Sergeant, but we want to know."

"General Jackson was put forward, by the International Junta, as the head of a movement against the Bogotá Government.

"If Jackson had succeeded, certain large interests would have been granted concessions and—but it is useless to go into that. The uprising did not succeed, although it came very near amounting to something. General Jackson was captured, and was promised his life and freedom if he would reveal the names of those who were backing him. He refused. The authorities remanded him to solitary confinement among the mountains, *incommunicado;* and he was to be kept there until he divulged the information desired by the Government."

Sergeant removed his pith helmet and mopped his perspiring brow with a handkerchief.

"Naturally," said he; "the actions of the Bogotá people aroused consternation among the members of the Junta. A very large reward was offered to any man or men who would rescue General Jackson. If the General had been made to yield up his information, there would have been claims for indemnity from half a dozen countries, to say nothing of capital charges against many influential Colombian citizens. The General had his papers in an iron box—but he burned

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the papers before the box fell into the hands of his enemies.

"There is a representative of the Junta in New York," he went on, "and Miss Bainbridge went to him with a Chinaman named Yip Wing, who had come from South America to Chicago. She had a plan for rescuing the General. Although the agent of the Junta thought the plan impracticable, he told Miss Bainbridge to go ahead. If she won, she was to have the reward."

"I see," said Pettigrew. "But why did Yip Wing go to Miss Bainbridge?"

"The General happens to be Miss Bainbridge's uncle."

"Ah!"

"The General, during his leisure moments, had tattooed a map on the Chinaman's back, and then had sent him forth to make his way out of the country and to far-away Chicago. No one was allowed to leave the secret camp where the General was held a prisoner, but the Chinaman succeeded in working his way out. He was helped by certain insurrectos in that part of the country who still look to the General to save the republic."

"The situation rapidly clears," said Pettigrew.

"Really, that's about all. The General was saved and is now in Trinidad."

"Just one thing more, Sergeant," said Pettigrew. "Do you know anything about Miss Bainbridge and her father?"

"I saw them in Colon. They were taking the steamer for New York on their way to Chicago."

"Good! How did they get away from the vicinity of Quibdo?"

"That was easily accomplished. At the town of San Pablo, on the San Juan River, a boat was waiting for them. That boat brought them around to Panama, and they crossed to Colon. They had a long cablegram in cipher from some one of the General's friends, announcing his escape and his safety. I came on to Puerto Limon, having been apprised that you gentlemen were bound for here."

Again Sergeant bade us good afternoon, and this time successfully departed.

"Money, Jules!" murmured Pettigrew, fingering the yellow-backs. "Real money!"

"Hardly enough to pay the Colombian national debt, however," I answered, harking back to something Pettigrew had said about the supposed "treasure."

"It's enough to take us back to the States pretty well heeled, anyhow," he remarked. He counted off fifty of the bills.

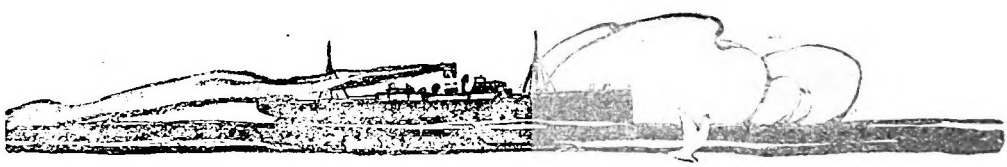
"Here, Trent," said he, handing the money to the airship man.

"What's that for?" inquired Trent.

"Jules and I promised to divide with you, share and share alike."

"That's so," said Trent, taking the money, rolling it up and pushing it into his pocket. "Now I can start a little revolution of my own," he added. "Go along, Pettigrew?"

"Hardly," laughed Pettigrew. "I'm going to New York with Jules—to New York, on my way to Chicago."



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Present Occupation _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

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Three Daisies

Fresh—Crisp—Delicious

Won Its Favor through Its Flavor
Made from Selected White Corn

NONE GENUINE WITHOUT THIS SIGNATURE

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